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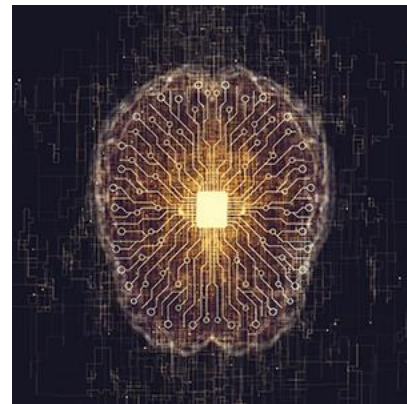
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## Reducing Information Overload With AI

By: [Marc Vontobel](#)

The modern workplace is a robust beast. There are tools, platforms, and software for everything. On average, companies use [75 different technologies](#) and with an increase in employees comes an increase in technologies, leaving larger organizations using 200+ tools in their tech stack.

As you input countless data points into your respective tools, “important” data is stored to support your organization's needs. The increase in technologies explains why 90 percent of the world's data has been produced in the last two years. But have you ever considered what happens when data continuously increases? It's information overload.



### What is information overload?

It's the endless keyword searches into your organization's knowledge base and sifting through countless documents, wasting hours a day on information searches that should take minutes.

It's experiencing deja-vu because you've seen 30 variations of the same document, many of which are now outdated and don't provide any helpful information.

It's the constant notifications and answering the same three questions 200 times because your colleagues know you're the knowledge holder, but don't know where to access the information.

It's hitting a dead end, with no solution and no idea whom to ask—even with a surplus of information.

Every working day, you and your colleagues experience symptoms of information overload. It seems to be a modern-day problem, but the term itself dates back to 1964. It originates from Bertram Gross and *The Managing of Organizations*, where he defined information overload as:

*"Information overload occurs when the amount of input to a system exceeds its processing capacity. Decision makers have fairly limited cognitive processing capacity. Consequently, when information overload occurs, it is likely that a reduction in decision quality will occur."*

Insights show that organizations are experiencing this today. Inputs exceed processing capacities as organizations use only 32 percent of all data, [leaving 68 percent untouched](#). Employees are [overwhelmed by the overload](#): 62.5 percent of UK employees say the amount of data they receive and process negatively impacts their work; 52 percent of US workers agree the quality of their work decreases because there's not enough time to review information quickly. And workers are making compromised decisions, as 29 percent of employees say they make decisions based on assumptions when they can't find the information and answers they need.

When dealing with information overload, organizations experience many pain points, from damage to employee experience to decreased productivity companywide. What is the root cause?

## What causes information overload in the workplace?

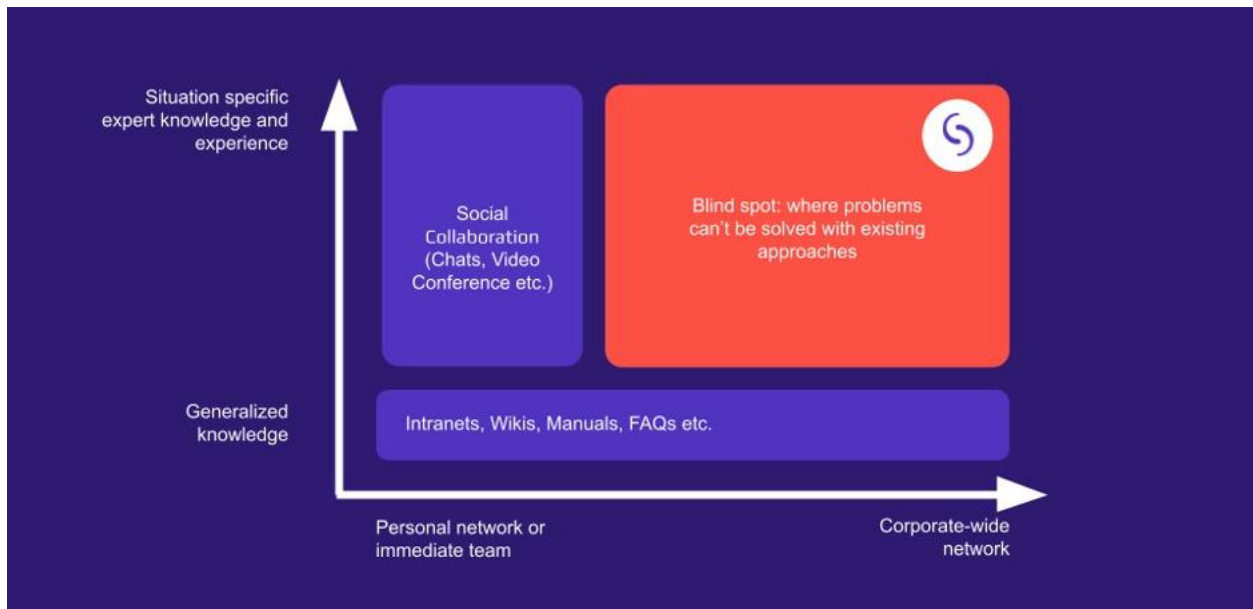
Information overload at work is the result of multiple contributing factors. The most prevalent are growing tech stacks, too much information, a lack of data contextualization, and redundant content and questions.

### Growing tech stacks

Remote and hybrid work have drastically changed the way we work, including the adoption of new and innovative tools—think of Zoom and Teams replacing traditional in-person meetings. These social collaboration tools and others support you in interacting within your organization, providing access to the knowledge and experience you need for specific situations. However, social collaboration tools typically limit your scope of interaction with colleagues and teams.

Corporate-wide comprehensive tools like intranets, wikis, manuals, and FAQs support your organization's entire network. They allow everyone to access the information. However, the knowledge and experience documented here are typically top-level and require lots of effort to maintain and ensure information relevancy.

Between collaboration tools supporting situation-specific knowledge-sharing with your immediate network and corporate-wide bases for generalized knowledge, there is a knowledge blind spot where problems are left unresolved due to their limitations or because they are within a silo. And we haven't even covered the tools added departmentally with limited access—further increasing the data captured, information needing to be exchanged, and silos created.



**Figure 1: Organizational blind spots**

### Too much information

Have you ever taken a bathroom break and returned to four new emails from colleagues, nine Slack notifications and one new meeting invite? With growing tech stacks and silos, you and your colleagues may not have access to the information you need when the time comes. Silos make even explicit data and knowledge already captured within your organization inaccessible—meaning you and your colleagues must actively find each other and facilitate the exchange of information. As a result, you step away from your work to answer colleagues' questions (emails, notifications, attend meetings) or are left searching for someone who might have the answer.

### Redundant data, content and questions

Have you ever input the same information into separate documents and tools? Or sifted through several resources that shared the same information? Answered the same questions for multiple colleagues?

Inputting data into several sources is time-consuming and a nightmare to maintain. It becomes increasingly complex and confuses everyone if forgotten, not linked, or ignored. What would you do if you found two different documented answers to the same question? Ask a colleague?

When internal documentation fails to give us the answers we need, we are left asking colleagues for help, or worse, we are stuck answering the same redundant questions to help our colleagues. Because business constantly changes and answers become outdated, this becomes a never-ending cycle.

## Lack of contextualization

Data is important. But, when organizations only use 32 percent of theirs, and much of it lies within silos, organizations don't get a complete picture of their business and instead experience information overload.

Your organization's information becomes redundant, outdated, and useless without contextualizing data. With information trapped in silos, data goes unused, and pieces to your organization's puzzle go missing.

Your employees should not be dealing with the effects of information overload. Everyone should have the ability to complete tasks and solve problems on time, focus on and hit business targets, and increase overall productivity.

New technology has provided (limited) support while creating new problems. It's time for a system that reduces information overload and actively manages and contextualizes the information, enables employees to find answers fast, and allows everyone to access the experts within their organization.

## How to prevent information overload with AI

Preventing an overload means actively managing the volume of information produced and kept while verifying the quality, making information within your organization accessible to everyone, and decreasing the time it takes for employees to access information. This can reduce information overload with the support of AI.

### Manage and contextualize data

As much as we love data, it's time to stop hoarding it and start managing it. An effective way is with artificial intelligence. AI can recognize when and what information is outdated or redundant. AI repairs data overload by forgetting unnecessary data and recycling useful (quality) information to manage data and prevent an overload. In addition, AI can provide a better picture of your business because, with permission, it can see through silos and access non-sensitive information from your internal tools. Accessing information from more points draws better conclusions at scale, limits the number of sources to search to find information, and creates a centralized location to map your organization's knowledge and the contributing people.

Contextualization helps everyone better understand and use the information available.

### Find a system to answer questions effectively

Employees find answers faster when you actively manage organizational data and information overload. However, when answers to questions reside within your organization's knowledge blind spot, everyone wastes too much time searching for the information or people to solve their business problems.

Having a system to answer questions effectively shrinks your organization's knowledge blind spot. An AI knowledge management system provides a central location where employees can ask questions anonymously and creates a repository of questions and answers within your

organization. The AI automatically tags related topics and generates a list of previously asked and answered questions when writing a query. If your question doesn't currently exist, you can post your question. Because of the AI-generated tags, the colleagues who are most likely to know the answer are instantaneously notified to answer the questions quickly.

Another benefit to a system like this is that you can ask (anonymously) and answer the redundant questions you receive from colleagues daily. And when the answer is no longer correct or outdated, instead of colleagues coming back to you for an updated solution, you can edit your original response and avoid reanswering hundreds of questions from colleagues. This reduces the number of notifications you receive from colleagues with questions, saves you time from answering unnecessary queries, allows you to focus more on completing the work that matters, and alleviates information overload.

## Find the experts within your organization

When business problems require more complex answers or need support from experts, it's not so simple. In organizations with 20,000+ people, finding the colleague you need would require sifting through documentation files, emails, or your entire organization's network. At this point, you have experienced information overload.

For times like these, having a source to find the experts within your organization will help speed the process of answering a question, completing a task, or even staffing a scrum team for a larger pressing project. A system backed by AI enables you to gain visibility to everyone within your organization, even if they are outside of your immediate network, team, or location. This type of system tracks who answers what, the quality of their answer, and the topic associated with their response, creating a comprehensive neural network of your organization in real time. When it is time to find the best person to help solve your problem, you have access to all the experts within your organization. If integrated with your existing communication tools, you can contact them simply with a click.



Finding the experts used to take days and weeks, but now it can take only minutes with the right tool and AI.

## Find the right tools for supporting your team

Finding the right tools or system that supports your employees and tackles the information overload is necessary for the modern workplace.

Here are features that you should look for in tools to help eliminate information overload:

- **Serves multiple functions;** a new tool can have the ability to replace various tools in your tech stack and minimize the number of sources your employees need to search through
- **Integrates with existing tools** to break down the digital silos and connect your data
- **Manages and contextualizes data** to eliminate redundant and outdated information, give more context, and enable employees to find the best answer fast
- **Shrinks your organization's knowledge blind spot**

Though technology has provided solutions to help conduct business faster than before, it has hindered us with information overload. It is a problem influenced greatly by technology, and it's a problem that technology can solve. A modern knowledge management solution can stop information overload and increase productivity.