AI is now an essential component of creativity in the workplace

The latest findings from Canva illustrate the importance that all creative workplaces now place on AI. As a tool to enhance the creative aspects of business, generative AI is now firmly in place as an essential tool. However, to truly unlock AI's advantages, more work needs to be done with education and training.

How do businesses harness creativity across their enterprises? According to _a new report from Canva_, embracing AI has rapidly become an essential tool to enhance the creative skills of workforces, large and small.

Founded ten years ago, _Canva_ has grown to become a leading visual communications tool businesses of all sizes now use to design diverse collateral, from presentations to advertisements. The drag-and-drop interface, which is fast to learn and offers many options, has gained a massive audience.

Generative AI's integration into businesses is accelerating. Canva's findings are interesting as they focus on how AI is being harnessed to generate creative content: Nearly three-quarters (70%) of the 4,000 respondents from marketing and creative leaders across Europe and the USA said they use generative AI to enhance their teams' creativity.

There are also other practical advantages, with at least two to three hours a

week being saved by using these AI tools, with 28% of respondents stating they save up to five hours a week. However, these tools are new. Business cases are still coming into focus.

And the skills needed to leverage the abilities of generative AI in a creative role are still being learned. Indeed, Canva's research concluded that 65% of respondents feel overwhelmed by the learning curve necessary to gain the most practical advantage from generative AI, with 55% also introducing guidelines around how and when these tools should be used.

Creative AI in the UK

Canva's report is global, but focusing on the UK, some interesting conclusions about how generative AI and creativity connect: One fascinating finding is that a huge 98% of marketing and creative professionals are comfortable with how generative AI is impacting their skills and industry, with three-quarters (75%) already considering AI an essential part of their toolkit. Just 14% feel generative AI is limiting their teams' creativity, with 41% stating they are concerned that the broader use of these tools could stifle original ideas and thinking.

For many businesses, time is one of their most precious assets. In the creative space, generating what can be large quantities of materials is time and resource-consuming. Here, Canva's research shouts that generative AI is transforming this aspect of the creative process, with 85% stating they have used an AI to help generative written materials, 83% to generate images, and 84% to edit images or video content. However, to balance this, just over half of the respondents (52%) believe that generative AI tools will be better at creating visual content in the next five years than humans.

Which _generative AI tools_ to use is a concern for many of Canva's respondents, with 67% stating there are too many generative AI tools to choose from. In addition, nearly half (48%) feel they are under pressure to use these tools. Clearly, more training is needed, as 39% stated they don't feel confident using the tools to gain the most from the features they have available to aid their creative processes.

As businesses will often be creating materials for their clients, Canva's report also asked about data privacy. Respondents raised concerns, with the most significant apprehension being how customer data (79%) would be used with generative AI tools. Slightly less (77%) felt their company data was a concern, with 78% pointing to personal data, bias, and potential plagiarism risks.

AI assistance

To gain an insight into the findings of the Canva report, Maddyness spoke with Duncan Clark, Europe Lead at Canva and began by asking how he would define generative AI in the context of the creative industries and what are its main applications.

"AI is acting as a catalyst for innovation and the creative process," Clark responded. "The speed at which the tools operate enables creatives and marketers to spend less time on tedious tasks and focus more on their creative output. For example, generative AI can assist creatives with brainstorming headlines or generating a high-quality image from a simple text description. AI is leading a seismic shift in how technology can enable creativity and design."

How has generative AI changed the creative process for artists, designers, and content creators?

"This new era of AI means that you no longer need specialised equipment to take a perfect photo, or technical software and long-honed skills to edit videos. AI is levelling the playing field and giving freedom to creators by liberating them from mundane tasks, such as editing images or unblocking workflows. The survey found that 84% of British creatives and marketers said that AI helps reduce repetitive tasks – with these tools looking after the day-to-day chores, teams have more capacity to create meaningful content and knuckle down on ideation and strategy, focusing mainly on the creative side of projects, and less on the busywork."

Can you provide insights into the ethical considerations surrounding the use of generative AI in the creative industries?

"Generative AI models are huge and complex to train, let alone safeguard against representational bias. As AI becomes mainstream, those using the technology must be aware that the tools can unintentionally amplify bias. The vast benefits of generative AI are undeniable, but it's also important to acknowledge and mitigate the biases that seep into these systems."

How does generative AI contribute to the personalisation and customisation of creative content for audiences?

"One of my favourite examples of using AI to personalise content is AI-powered translation. If you're an organisation with a global footprint, creating content in multiple languages, at speed, is crucial. Not to mention the many channels that need managing – whether it's social media, newsletters or blogs. Being able to visually communicate your message to a global audience in a timely manner is critical for today's brands."

How can individuals or organisations effectively integrate generative AI into their creative processes?

"AI might be new, but user problems aren't. It's important to understand what tools exist and how they can enhance creativity and simplify workflows. There's little benefit of using AI just for the sake of it. Is an AI image generator that creates cute pictures of cats riding skateboards on the moon going to add value to one's work? Probably not. It's important to seek out the tools that will unlock efficiencies and uplift productivity. This is where individuals and organisations will find the most value. At the end of the day AI is a piece of technology that should solve user problems."

What are the potential risks and concerns associated with over-reliance on generative AI in creative endeavours?

"Becoming too dependent on generative AI tools may impact our own critical thinking skills. It's important to view AI tools as complementary to creativity. AI can provide new insights and inspiration to creatives, allowing them to push the boundaries and create content in ways we thought were impossible."

Can you share successful case studies or examples of businesses or artists who have effectively leveraged generative AI?

"One of our customers, a leading insurance brokerage firm, uses AI-powered machine translation to translate text in designs into various languages. It's enabling them to turn around a first-draft translation in five minutes – down from two weeks. This is a remarkable improvement.

"The company also uses AI to edit and enhance images used in client materials. If they need to add a text overlay and there's something in the way, they'll tap the power of AI to remove the unwanted object. They're also using an AI text generator to summarise text with the click of a button for clients looking for more condensed versions of materials.

"Another customer example is Peppy, a digital health app. The creative team there is limited to one designer who has been using an AI-text generator to help brainstorm concepts quickly. It's been a useful tool to come up with ideas for illustrations or social media posts. The designer also uses AI-powered photo editing to transform headshots and replace their backgrounds. These tools have been transformational for Peppy's productivity and have enabled the designer to streamline their daily workload. The enthusiasm and rate of adoption from our customers for our AI-tools has been extraordinary to see."

What are the essential skills or knowledge areas that individuals

interested in working with generative AI in the creative sector develop?

"One of the most important skills will be understanding what can be 'tooled' by AI and what needs to be 'human.' Some of that will depend on an individual's skillset. Copywriters will write great text, but they may rely on tools to support them in areas that are not their core competency. And those who are not so verbal may well lean on AI for inspiration. AI will also help overcome barriers and discover creative places to start especially in areas where individuals may not be as competent."

In your opinion, what are the most exciting and groundbreaking possibilities that generative AI could bring to the creative industries in the near future?

"Our founders built Canva on the basis that the design world was loosely fragmented. People were going between different platforms, trialling and testing various tools to create something simple, but they needed more luck. This is similar to AI. What we're now seeing with this powerful tool is making design more accessible and helping creatives enhance their work.

"We view AI as a natural extension of our mission to empower the world to design – with as little friction as possible. The great advancements we're seeing with AI have given us the opportunity to reimagine the design process once again. It's making it even easier to take what is in your head, get it onto a page, and out into the world, faster than ever before. AI-powered tools are breathing new life into creativity and productivity, and we expect this to continue as the technology evolves and more organisations bring AI tools into the workplace."

How do you see the future of generative AI evolving in the creative industries in the next 5-10 years?

"AI has exploded at a time when there's real demand for large amounts of visual and written content to be created quickly. This is especially useful for marketing and creative leaders who must work at astronomical speed, and on a global scale. As more channels emerge and audiences grow, content expectations will only increase. AI will continue to empower users to bring their ideas to life with as little friction as possible. It'll help marketers and creatives scale their craft and minimise the time spent on non-creative work. It will doubtless continue to amaze us along the way."

Working with machines

Generative AI tools are impacting all business processes. Creativity within enterprises is benefitting from the rapid advancements of these tools. The early hype that AI and machine learning gained is now being tempered with tangible business cases and the practical application of these tools.

Indeed, the latest research from Workday suggests general optimism, with 73% of business leaders believing AI and machine learning will impact the global business landscape and 58% stating that these technologies will significantly amplify human potential. However, these positive signs are curtailed as 46% of respondents spend more than 20% of their annual budgets on these tools, and just 13% of UK businesses are prepared to adopt these technologies.

"Despite some uncertainty, leaders are optimistic that AI and machine learning will augment their workforce and drive productivity," said Jim Stratton, chief technology officer at Workday. "Trust is paramount to embracing these benefits, and building trust requires the right data foundation and commitment to governance. By implementing trustworthy solutions prioritising data quality and transparency, companies can reap the rewards of AI and ML across their organisation."

Clearly, the creative potential across all businesses can be enhanced with generative AI tools supported by a wider adoption of machine learning. Canva's research reveals enthusiasm for these technologies, but their users are still determining how to connect their skills with these tools to deliver the best creative content they can. Moving forward, any business needing creative content must use AI tools. More training and education, though, is vital.

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