

One year on: has ChatGPT really changed the game?

Generative AI is all conquering; it's going to take all of our jobs; marketing will never be the same again. Ever since Open AI's breakthrough launch last November, it would seem that ChatGPT is still a dominant tech narrative. But approaching 12 months on from its watershed launch - what impact has it really had and, more importantly, is it really the future?

Years ago, having a conversation with an artificial intelligence (AI), asking it to answer almost any question you have, or to come up with a new creative idea might have seemed a far-in-the-distance, futuristic concept. Add to the equation the ability for that same AI to be able to generate human-like text including copy, proposals, essays, even poetry, and it might have appeared a near impossible feat.

Yet, in November 2022 Open AI made it happen with the arrival of ChatGPT. Marking a game-changing breakthrough for AI. It opened up vast new possibilities in all walks of business and life, promising to revolutionise content creation, marketing, customer support, and more.

However, as with any hype cycle, almost twelve months on and the initial fervour is wearing off in favour of a more critical gaze over its key features and benefits, along with any inherent flaws. Principally, the big question in all this is: is the hype justified?

The answer to this question is by no means a simple one. In my experience, while each of ChatGPT's key uses certainly offers benefits, there are also various niggles that need to be addressed before it becomes truly transformative.

Take, for instance, its ability to retrieve information. Chat GPT is able to churn out relevant information nearly instantly without the need to manually trawl search engines; it's easy to see why the chatbot was once dubbed the 'Google killer', as it effectively cuts out the middleman.

If you enter, for example, "what is a circular economy?" into a traditional search engine, you'll get a batch of results which you'll need to sift through. Place that same question into ChatGPT and you'll most likely get a list of user-friendly responses in a consumable format, often in bullet points or simple step-by-steps. This can prove an incredibly useful research tool, but it's no Google.

Mainly, because all gen AI applications are only as accurate as the information which has been fed into them. Unfortunately for AI, the world, and the information available, is constantly changing. This leaves broad scope for inaccuracies and means that fact-checking is essential. By comparison, Google results are in real-time and include full sources (most of the time).

Another interesting debate centres on ChatGPT's content and communication capabilities. You'll likely have seen the headlines about ChatGPT writing college-worthy essays and passing exams.

In reality, though, there is little for copywriters to be worried about at the moment. Having used ChatGPT on occasion to prompt blog posts or articles for our website, it's not the complete package just yet. It requires a lot of prompting and amends before there is something even close to the high standard we expect of our content.

To this end, while it can be great for helping to create a basic copy outline, a certain level of human intervention (often a lot), is necessary. As a general rule, AI is much better at helping you research a topic, rather than writing the whole thing for you.

This takes me onto another, less documented issue. Inherently, SEO is the holy grail of the digital marketing world. But getting it right requires a carefully articulated programme of original content enriched with relevant keywords.

Imagine a world where all businesses in an industry, say recruitment firms, use ChatGPT to draft similar blogs on 'bridging the skills gap'.

If those firms don't take the time to customise the blog post, they run the risk

of producing near-enough the same blog as everyone else; we're looking at a world where every business is saying the same things in the same way – a world where content is devoid of emotion and the human touch.

Of course, at the moment this risk is relatively minimal. Most ChatGPT outputs aren't good enough to be used without editing from a professional. However, it's worth keeping in mind that AI is in its infancy – this is the worst version of AI we'll ever have. It remains to be seen how AI will navigate SEO in the future as tech develops.

Finally, we move onto customer interactions.

Chatbots aren't a new thing in the customer service world, they've been around for years, but what distinguishes ChatGPT is its ability to understand and respond to more complex queries and engage with customers in a more human-like, engaging and memorable way.

But is this revolutionising customer support? Probably not.

Yes, it can be useful in many cases, such as filtering enquiries until a human operator is available, or providing an automated out-of-hours response, but as with all generative AI applications, its scope for misinformation, inaccuracies and its inherent lack of empathy renders it a poor substitute for the real thing.

This is most pertinent in sectors where the customer experience is paramount, such as hospitality, retail and travel.

This said, the reality is that ChatGPT is still in its infancy. As seen many times before, most major innovation leaps are the result of continuous iteration and developments – and there is likely a lot more to come from ChatGPT in the next twelve months and beyond.

For now though, the recommendation is to look beyond all the hype and ensure all aspects of generative AI are served with a weighty portion of human intelligence – there's no substitute for the human touch just yet!

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