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Using AI to generate content and design for a website

You surely can't have missed the hype around AI over the last year or so. It's been everywhere. But why? and how can you use AI to support your digital presence?

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, has been around for a while, almost as long as digital computers. The first generally recognised AI implementation was a robot mouse called Theseus. Created in 1950, Theseus was a remote-controlled mouse that could find its way out of a maze and remember the route. But after an initial flurry of excitement about the possibilities of computer programs that can learn, there was very little development in the field until the early 2020s. It's been the development of hardware that's finally got to a point where it's are capable of supporting the huge amount of computing power that is needed by AI

What we now tend to refer to as Artificial Intelligence is more accurately called machine learning and refers to the ability of a computer to absorb a huge amount of information – the training set and rework that information to create an output in response to a input query. The input query is usually in the form of a text prompt.

There is a large and growing number of tools that you can use to help you with your online presence, here are a few;

Uizard.io is a free web design tool that can convert a text prompt into a wireframe or mockup that you can then edit.

Framer is a suite of tools that can generate code from Figma designs and rewrite copy.

Sketch2Code is a free AI tool from Microsoft that can convert a sketch into a working website using HTML and CSS.

Umso: is a tool for website creation with templates, drag-and-drop design, and simplified features for beginners.

ChatGPT, probably the best known tool, generates text, images, and code from natural language.

And of course, more are becoming available all the time.

At this early stage in the development of the technology, the full benefit of these tools is only just starting to become apparent. But it's already clear that there is money to be saved by streamlining and automating the creative process.

It's also been suggested by some that the quality of creative work can be improved.

We've started to use AI tools such as Midjourney on lower budget projects to replace high cost elements such as illustration and we're going to continue to develop working process that incorporate AI. However it's worth considering the risks and disadvantages as well. I think the main disadvantage is certainly that AI written copy can be both inaccurate and bland. As I've said, these tools work by absorbing a huge amount of input information and using that as the basis for the output. This means that inevitably there's no originality in output text. The result can feel a bit like mashing up all different colours of Play Doh to get a deeply unpleasant brown. There's also the risk of 'hallucination' – when an AI tool effectively makes stuff up! If you're using AI to write copy, then fact checking is going to end up taking up an increasing amount of your time.

There are also issues of copyright. The training data is generally souced from the internet and includes a huge amount of copyrighted material. The creators of this work are not being compensated and this is likely to become the focus of increasing concern and legislation is likely in the medium term.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that many of the tools themselves require significant knowledge and skill to use effectively and these skills are not as common as traditional creative ones.

It's far too soon to tell exactly how AI will change our world. For every expert that predicts a utopian future, you can find one that foresees catastrophe. What is certain is that AI can be used effectively right now to make the creative process cheaper and more effective, as long as you don't think it can do everything a human can do.

For this article, we've used Microsoft's Co-Pilot and Perplexity to suggest a structure for the piece and to rewrite one of the product descriptions. Everything else was done by a real human.

Can you tell?

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