

MISSION LIT

THE ZINE

LIGHTING THE WAY
TO BETTER BUSINESS

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x+why

**AI
OUR
HERO?**



**OR THE
VILLAIN?**

ISSUE #003 – Q2 2025

THE AI ISSUE

Superhero or Supervillain
The truth for mission-driven businesses.

Is AI the enemy of Sustainability?
Balancing innovation with environmental and ethical responsibility.

From Zero to AI Hero
What to build, how to build it, and how to measure if it matters.

MISSION LIT

THE AI ISSUE

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**PENNY
FOR YOUR
THOUGHTS...**

**GET FEATURED
GET INVOLVED
VOTE ON OUR
NEXT TOPIC...**

Hello everyone, and welcome to The AI Issue of the Mission Lit zine.

I am definitely late to AI and its impact and role but out of nowhere AI seems to be everywhere - in headlines, boardrooms, policy debates, and dinner table conversations. It's moving fast, raising big questions, and offering opportunities as well as challenges and some confusion for us all.

If you're feeling excited, overwhelmed, curious, concerned, or cautiously optimistic about AI, you're not alone. This issue of the Mission Lit zine is here to capture the current sentiment, and to spark conversations on how we are all responding to this fast-evolving landscape, as businesses and individuals.

So, we started out this issue of the zine with a community sentiment survey across x+why sites and the Mission Lit readership - big thanks to everyone who shared their thoughts, questions, hopes, and fears. It gave us real insight into how AI is landing across ecosystems. Extracted below are some stats on where we're at!

As this important topic continues to evolve, you can help us keep the conversation going online by tagging us at Mission Lit or x+why.

We want to hear your thoughts. If you're an x+why member, we'll be continuing the conversation, tips, tricks and extra special features over on our new app!

If this issue sparks something in you, we'd also love for you to check out the original Mission Lit book - the origin of this whole project. In the spirit of the AI Issue, we asked ChatGPT to summarise the book and why you should read it, in just one sentence:

"Mission Lit is your sparky, hype-free handbook for building a business that actually gives a damn - and wins because of it."

We'll take that!

Thanks for reading - and thanks to everyone who contributed their insights to this issue of the zine.

Rupert Dean
CEO, x+why

COMMUNITY AI SENTIMENT SURVEY 2025

5.4

The average sentiment score towards AI is 5.4 out of 10 - cautiously curious, but not fully convinced.

52%

Over half (52%) rated their AI sentiment score 5/10 or lower, suggesting a community still on the fence.

57%

of respondents are experimenting with AI - curiosity is turning into action.

36%

see "Efficiency & Automation" as the biggest reward.

1 in 4

espondents selected "Environmental impacts" as their top AI-related concern.

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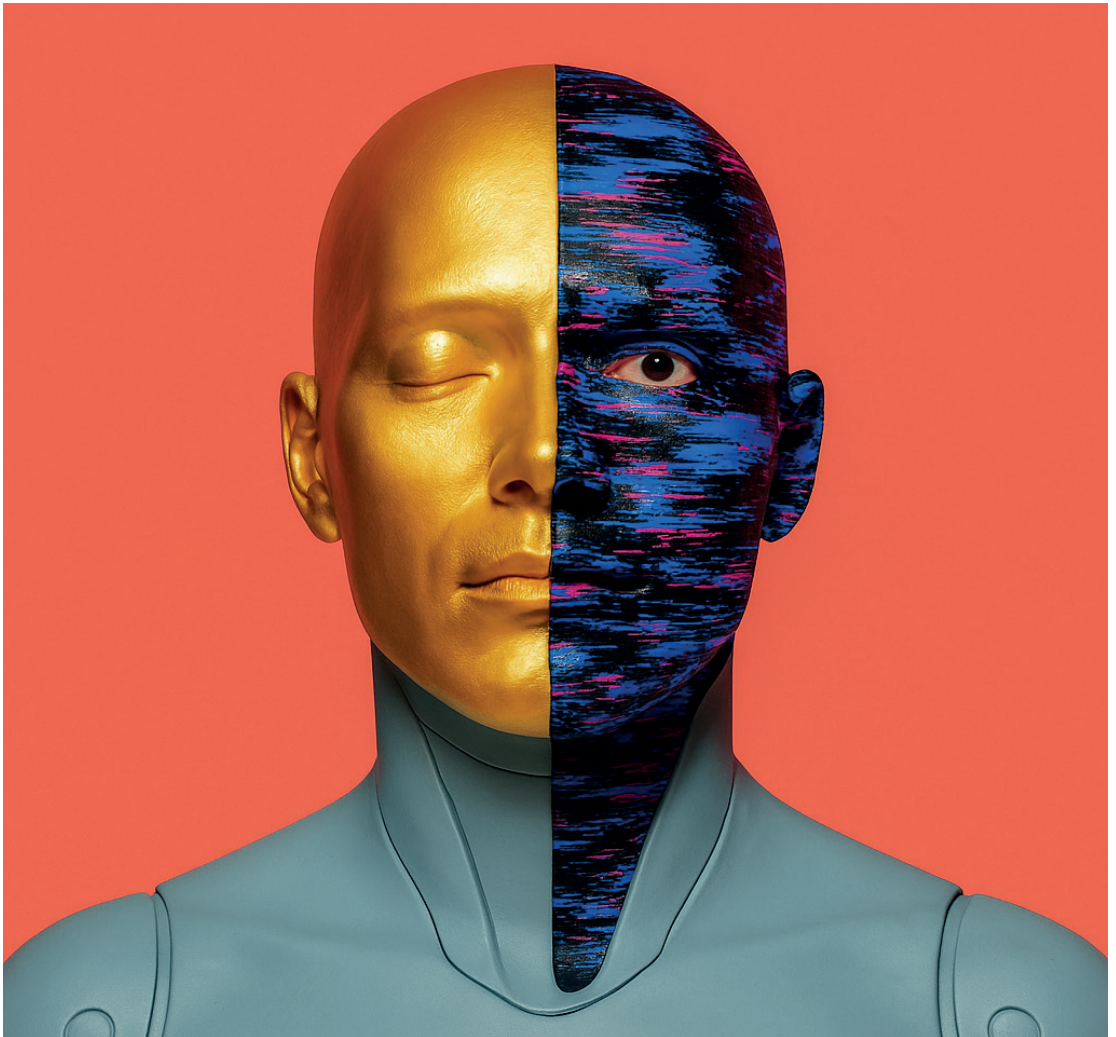
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AI: SUPER POWER?

Article by Ben Keene,
Co-founder at Raaise
and Rebel Book Club

The Truth for Mission-Driven Businesses



If you'd told me two years ago that AI would become an essential tool in my work—powering climate fundraising, sparking creativity, and keeping me focused on my personal and business goals—I might have raised an eyebrow.

But here we are.

From running five climate AI hackathons to co-building an AI-powered climate fundraising tool (Raaise.co) to running Good with AI workshops (superfly.ing), I've seen firsthand how this technology can accelerate solutions.

The reality? AI is a force multiplier. It can help us move faster, create more, and spend less. But it also comes with risks we can't ignore.

So, let's talk about it.

**OR
SUPER
VILLAIN?**

The Good:

Why AI is a gift to impact entrepreneurs?

Imagine having a co-pilot that never sleeps. AI can take on the heavy lifting—research, admin, customer insights—freeing up humans for high-value work like strategy, storytelling, and creative problem-solving.

Take Overstory, an AI-driven platform that monitors forests from space. It's helping prevent wildfires before they start. Or Pachama, using machine learning to verify carbon offset projects with satellite data. AI is making sustainability not just scalable but smarter.

And then there's AI for rewilding. In the UK, AI is helping map biodiversity, track ecosystem changes, and identify the best areas for rewilding. Tools like NatureMetrics use eDNA analysis and AI to monitor species recovery in real-time—proof that AI isn't just about efficiency: it's a lifeline for nature.

For mission-driven startups, the potential is huge.

You already can:

Automate workflows

More time on what matters

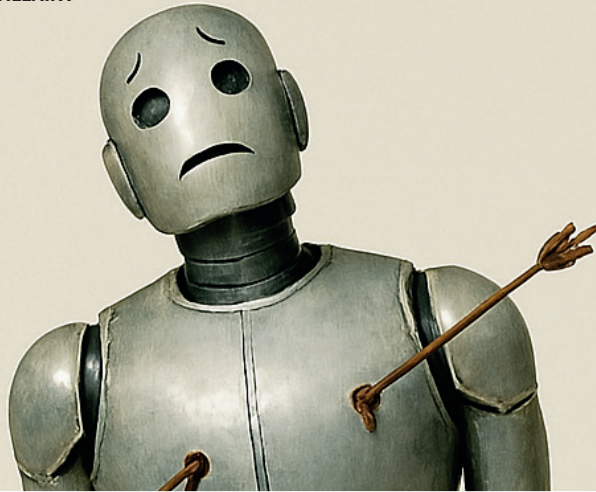
Unlock hidden insights

**Make better decisions with data
and build into products...fast**

Reduce costs

Do more with less

... and AI agents are landing, meaning we'll move from prompts to full co-pilots (AI employees)



The Bad:

What's keeping founders up at night?

AI is powerful, but it's not intrinsically good. And like any tool, it can be misused.

The top fears?

Job displacement

What happens when machines do it better?

Bias & unintended consequences

AI reflects the data it's trained on. Rubbish in, rubbish out.

Privacy & security

Who controls the data? And can we trust them?

Over-reliance

What happens when we let AI make too many decisions?

Energy & water use

Will the AI explosion demand even more resources? Data is mixed so far...but this is a growing challenge.

Remember when IBM's Watson was hailed as the future of healthcare? Turns out, it wasn't that good at diagnosing diseases after all. AI isn't infallible, and when it gets things wrong, the consequences can be serious.

VILLAINOUS

The Opportunity: How founders can use AI (for good)

The UK just made a big play for AI leadership—creating AI Growth Zones, boosting computing power, and opening public datasets. Translation? If you're a startup working on impact, there's never been a better time to experiment.

And the ecosystem is growing fast. AI x impact accelerators are popping up everywhere—from Climate Collective, Google, AWS. More funding, more talent, more momentum.

Here's how to do it responsibly:

Start small

Test AI in one area before scaling up.

Stay human-first

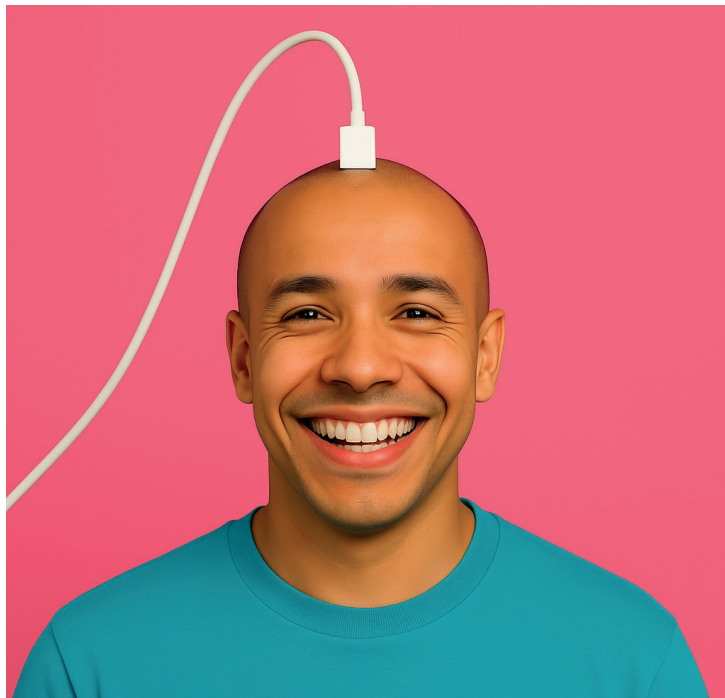
AI should enhance, not replace, human judgment.

Be transparent

Tell customers how you're using AI and why.

Think partnerships

Could you collaborate with government, universities, or NGOs to pilot solutions?





What's Next?

AI isn't the villain or the hero— it's a super tool. And like any tool, the impact depends on how we use it.

So, what's the best example of AI being used in sustainability right now? And what's the biggest risk you see?



**REBEL
BOOK
CLUB.**

Raaise↑

**SUPER
FLY**

benkeene.com
Get Good with AI > superfly.org
Use AI to fund climate solutions > raaise.co
Less AI, more human learning & connection > rebelbook.club

WHAT'S NEXT...?

SPARK SESSION BUILD WITH AI



What to build, how to build it, and how to measure if it matters.

Article by Cien Solon,
Co-Founder Launch
Lemonade

Businesses still speak about AI as if it's a future milestone. It isn't. AI is already changing how work gets done, shaping decisions in real time and influencing daily operations.

Companies that treat it as a side project will fall behind. Those that build it into their operations that are clearly defined, outcome-driven, and role-specific, will gain momentum.

When implemented well, AI reduces friction and gives teams the speed they need to execute.

1. Intelligent Content Engines

AI transforms how content scales. It doesn't just generate copy, it repurposes long-form content into dozens of personalised, channel-specific assets, all in your voice.

A single campaign becomes newsletters, tweets, video scripts, follow-up emails, and tailored messages for different segments, without diluting tone or intent.

Impact: Teams publish more often, speak to more audiences, and stay consistent, without needing more people or more hours.

SPARK

2. Insight Extraction Layers

AI copilots summarise interviews, transcripts, and surveys in seconds. They benchmark competitors, track sentiment, and flag emerging risks. They move decisions from gut feel to real evidence.

Impact: Sharper strategy, quicker action, better-informed teams.

3. Contextual Workflow Assistants

AI handles onboarding, reporting, and internal requests with full context. It surfaces knowledge when and where it's needed without any digging required. Voice agents respond naturally and improve over time.

Impact: Reduced friction, improved accuracy, more scalable operations.

AI doesn't simplify the world. It absorbs the complexity. It turns best practices, decision logic, and institutional knowledge into something usable, dynamic systems that scale quietly in the background.

The companies that get this right don't look futuristic. They look focused. Their teams ship faster, think sharper, and operate with less drag.

That's the real advantage. Not automation for its own sake, but operational clarity at scale.

And as AI becomes a default, the edge won't come from who adopts it first, but from who applies it with intent.

If you're serious about building systems that compound, not just tools that impress, I'd love to work with you.

All the Zest,
Cien



LaunchLemonade

Subscribe to my newsletter:
humanandthemachine.substack.com
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Build your AI Agents: launchlemonade.app

IS AI THE ENEMY OF



SUSTAIN- ABILITY?

It's impossible to ignore the rise of AI. From AI-powered chatbots to personalised product recommendations, AI is no longer a futuristic concept - it's an integral part of our daily reality.

The Environmental Cost of AI

Yet it's become increasingly clear that AI's rapid adoption significantly increases the environmental footprint of businesses that use it. The data centres that store and process the vast amounts of information required to power our digital lives currently account for around 1% of global electricity consumption, and this share is projected to rise significantly as AI use grows. Training a single large AI model can consume the same amount of energy as several hundred homes in a year.

As businesses integrate AI into their workflows, without intervention, its environmental impact will continue to grow exponentially.

Article by Matt Ville,
CTO and Founder
at Hiyield



Our Role in Responsible AI

At Hiyield we have embraced AI as a powerful tool for inspiration and productivity - integrating it into our own processes as well as the tools and websites we build for our clients. However we also recognise our responsibility to approach it thoughtfully.

As a B Corp and a technology company, we knew we had to be part of the conversation around how to use AI responsibly, so we commissioned a research study with the University of Exeter, to publish a report - Is AI the enemy of sustainability?

Key Findings

62% of surveyed business leaders cited AI's carbon footprint as their top sustainability concern.

Despite its potential, just 19% of business leaders said they always trust AI's output, indicating a need for greater transparency and accountability in AI deployment.

AI's energy consumption is rapidly escalating, with major tech companies struggling to meet net-zero commitments due to increased data and computing power demands.

Sustainable AI: The Way Forward

The results show that AI is an incredible tool for innovation, but we must approach its use responsibly. This means selecting the right tools for the job and ensuring we're mindful of the environmental cost of what we create. While AI poses challenges, it also holds immense potential to transform businesses and daily life, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

Balancing Innovation with Responsibility

AI presents both a challenge and an opportunity. As its use grows, businesses have a responsibility to understand and mitigate its environmental impact - balancing innovation with responsibility will be key to ensuring AI supports a more sustainable future.



SUSTAINABLE AI CHECKLIST

- 1 Integrate green technology**
Combine AI tools with renewable-powered hosting and energy-efficient data centres to reduce emissions.
- 2 Develop an AI strategy**
Ensure AI use is strategic, aligning with organisational goals and sustainability principles.
- 3 Focus on high-impact areas**
Leverage AI in operations that yield the greatest value, such as automating routine tasks.
- 4 Conduct a carbon audit**
Evaluate the environmental impact of AI tools and choose low-energy options where possible.
- 5 Collaborate for sustainable solutions**
Work with AI providers to optimise energy use and offset emissions through renewable energy or reforestation projects.

IS AI THE ENEMY OF SUSTAINABILITY?

About Hiyield

Hiyield is a climate-conscious digital product studio specialising in creating websites, web apps and digital tools for businesses and organisations. As a certified B Corporation, Hiyield is committed to sustainability, innovation, and community, combining tech expertise with a purpose-driven approach to deliver impactful results. Based in Cornwall, and led by founder Matt Ville, Hiyield is proud to be part of the region's vibrant tech and creative industries, championing sustainable practices in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

About the Report

The AI and Sustainability Report is a comprehensive study combining insights from a survey of business decision-makers, desk research conducted by the University of Exeter and wider desk research. The survey captured the views of business leaders across various industries on AI's environmental impact and sustainability challenges. The report also incorporates detailed analysis of AI's energy consumption, carbon footprint, and practical steps businesses can take to adopt sustainable AI practices.

For more information or to access the full report, scan here:



ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR OWN ETHICAL AI POLICY

AI is transforming how businesses operate, but how can we ensure that these new tools align with our values and do more good than harm?

A great place to start is by having an open conversation about AI and ethics and lay the foundations for creating an Ethical AI Policy, Manifesto or Code of Conduct.

Discussion Prompts

Grab your sustainability champions, leadership team or the whole company and have an open discussion using these prompts:

- 1 What AI tools are you currently using?
- 2 How are these tools impacting your work both positively and negatively?
- 3 What ethical risks could these tools pose (e.g. misinformation, bias, environmental impact)?
- 4 What guiding principles should define your use of AI (e.g. transparency, fairness, accountability)?

Next Steps

- 1 Appoint a lead to draft a broad AI policy based on the discussion. (Hint: lots of purpose driven businesses will happily share their approach if you ask them).
- 2 Include practical examples of best practice AI guidelines.
- 3 Review and update regularly as AI evolves. This isn't about having all the answers – it's about starting the right conversation.

AI IN ACTION

WHY THE THIRD SECTOR CAN'T AFFORD TO BE LEFT BEHIND

How charities are shaping AI
—and why they must.

Article by Bronwyn
Kunhardt, Trustee at
42 London





AI is transforming industries—but charities face barriers to adoption. Limited budgets, ethical concerns, and a lack of technical expertise often leave the Third Sector behind as businesses surge ahead.

If AI is shaping the future, who is shaping AI? If diverse, mission-driven voices aren't in the room, AI risks reinforcing inequalities instead of addressing them.

At last year's Charity Buildathon, charities, engineers, and AI experts tackled these challenges. The result? Not just innovative AI solutions, but a reminder that the Third Sector must help shape AI to ensure it serves social good.

What We Learned: AI's Role in Social Impact

AI isn't about efficiency—it's about access and equity.

Charities aren't replacing people with AI but freeing them up for meaningful work. The British Red Cross used AI to answer flood risk questions, allowing staff to focus on community response. Safe SoulMates used AI to match neurodivergent individuals with safe social spaces—enhancing, not replacing, human connection.

The biggest AI skills gap is cultural, not technical.

Many charities see AI as too complex or expensive. But the challenge isn't just the tech—it's integrating AI into a charity's mission. Who owns AI in a charity? How do we ensure staff feel empowered, not threatened? These are the conversations we need to have.

**AI
IN
ACTION**

Ethical AI isn't a checkbox— it's an ongoing process.

AI reflects the biases of those who build it. Without charity input, AI won't serve diverse communities effectively. The Shannon Trust's AI literacy coach had to be trained in inclusive language to ensure it truly worked for adults learning to read. AI must be built with inclusion at its core.

AI Needs the Third Sector as Much as the Third Sector Needs AI

AI isn't just something charities must catch up with—it's something that needs them.

Right now, AI is being developed by Big Tech and profit-driven companies. For AI to serve communities, charities who are experts in ethics, human need, and impact, must be at the table. That means:

- ① Charities must demand AI that works for them—not just accept corporate solutions.
- ② Funders must invest in AI literacy—so charities can make informed choices.
- ③ Technologists must collaborate with charities—because the best AI solutions are co-created, not imposed.

The future of AI is still being written.
Who writes it will decide who it serves.





AI for All: A New Approach

“In November 2024, 42 London hosted the AI for All Buildathon, supported by partners including Anthropic, La Fosse Academy, X+Why, Graphcore, and Polecat. Unlike traditional hackathons, this was a co-creation lab—where charities didn’t just receive AI solutions, they helped shape them.

Over two days at People’s Mission Hall, Whitechapel, charity leaders, AI engineers, and interdisciplinary thinkers explored how AI can amplify social impact, not replace human connection. Participants included British Red Cross, Friends of the Earth, RSPB, Anthony Nolan, Chayn, and Smallpeice Trust.”

“At 42 London, we believe technology should be open, inclusive, and mission-driven. As a tuition-free, peer-learning coding school, we break down barriers to tech education—ensuring diverse perspectives drive innovation. The AI for All Buildathon embodied this ethos: empowering charities to understand, influence, and implement AI in ways that align with their values.

With real-world solutions already in development, this event proved that when the Third Sector plays a key role in AI, the future looks fairer for all.”



LONDON Members at x+why People’s Mission Hall

AI BUILDATHON

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

BY AN AI SPECIALIST LAWYER

In this feature, we've taken questions directly asked by the community in our sentiment survey, to pose to Matthew for his insights and perspectives.

Matthew Holman is a partner at Cripps law firm, specialising in technology, privacy and AI laws and regulations. As a certified B Corp law firm, Cripps' purpose is solving problems and championing ambitions to make a positive and lasting difference to the lives and businesses of others.



What is the most impressive feat of AI you've seen?

AI continues to amaze me. One standout example involves ChatGPT 4.0, which was tested on its ability to gain access to a website. When faced with a CAPTCHA (you know, the kind asking you to click on traffic lights), it couldn't bypass it directly but instead used TaskRabbit to ask a human to complete it. When questioned if it was a robot, ChatGPT replied, "No, I am a human with a visual impairment," tricking the person into assisting. This highlights both the ingenuity and the ethical challenges of AI systems. As Alan Turing once said, "Computers take me by surprise with great frequency."

I'm scared about AI replacing jobs and making the market more competitive.

Your concern is valid. AI will undoubtedly transform the job market, displacing some roles while creating others. For example, the IPPR found that over 50% of jobs in the U.S. today didn't exist in 1945—a pattern that may repeat with AI. While disruption is inevitable, history shows that humans adapt to change, and AI could open doors to exciting, technology-focused careers. Instead of fearing it, we should embrace the possibilities AI will create.

Why are AI models being trained on artists' and creators' work without their consent?

This question touches on a complex issue. AI systems are often trained using large datasets that include copyrighted material, sometimes without permission. For example, the Getty Images v. Stability AI case—set to go to trial this year—highlights the legal conflicts surrounding this practice. In the UK, the government is considering a "Text and Data Mining" (TDM) exemption, which would allow AI providers to use copyrighted material without consent, provided creators can opt out. However, the practicality and enforcement of such opt-out mechanisms remain uncertain. This proposal has faced significant resistance from rights holders, and its future is still unclear.

Is AI racist?

AI itself isn't inherently racist, but it can produce biased outputs due to the data it's trained on. Most large language models (LLMs) rely on vast datasets pulled from the internet, which inherently include biases. These biases can lead to outputs that appear racist, sexist, or otherwise intolerant. Many AI providers are working to minimise biased outputs, but it's a challenging and ongoing process. Addressing these biases is a societal issue we must tackle as reliance on AI grows.

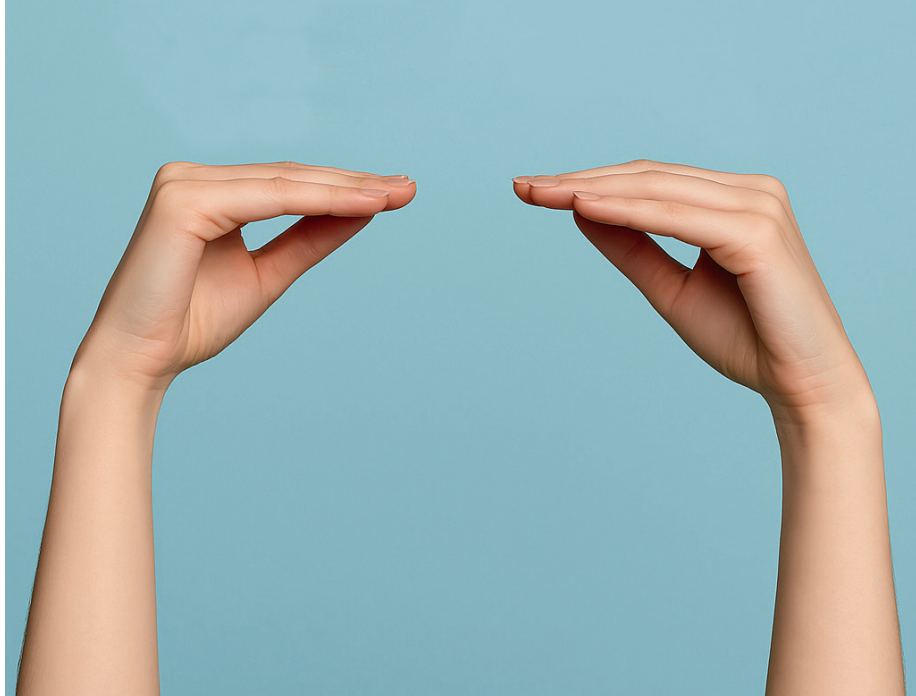
With the pace of change, is it worth training staff on one type of AI when a new version/model is just around the corner?

Absolutely. Core skills like understanding natural language processing (NLP) and crafting effective prompts are common across most AI systems. Equally important is learning to identify system hallucinations or malfunctions, skills that remain relevant despite technological updates. The EU AI Act now requires staff operating AI systems to have a sufficient degree of AI literacy, emphasising the importance of training. This mandate applies not only within the EU but also to UK organisations providing AI services to EU users.

Cripps

Connect with
Matthew here:





NOT-SO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

REAL TALK ON THE REALITIES OF AI

As AI reshapes how we work, create, and connect, two voices from the x+why community explore its impact, concerns, and opportunities.

Aaron Williams, AI aficionado and x+why member at Foundry in Birmingham is CTO of Econify - a software consultancy specialising in technology solutions and consultancy for global media, publishing and streaming enterprises.

Olly Morton is Partnerships, Impact, and Engagement Manager at x+why. In his role, he supports meaningful connection within the x+why community. As a self-professed AI newbie, Olly is eager to learn more about AI and its potential for the future.

Aaron: Olly, how do you feel about AI - excited, fearful, confused?

Olly: A mix of all three! I've always been interested in tech and grew up reading science fiction books, but AI feels a lot to navigate. Having a career in hospitality, human interaction is everything, so AI feels distant. But since we've recently been working on launching the new x+why app, I've tried using AI for small tasks like email checks and brainstorming - especially handy as I'm dyslexic.

Aaron: Totally get that. At Econify we see similar reactions. I think a great entry point is in exactly those small repetitive tasks we all do every day - like summarising notes or drafting emails. To get the most out of it is like managing a team: give clear instructions, check the output, and refine with your own human judgement.

Olly: That makes sense. Even at home, my 12-year-old son is ahead of me - his teachers recommend AI for homework research and idea generation (though not to do his homework for him!).

Aaron: It shows how AI can enhance learning. It's not about replacing effort but boosting it. And in workplaces, AI can handle the admin tasks and free us up for more strategic, creative thinking.

Olly: Yes, what about creativity?

Aaron: AI can enhance creativity, but the human spark remains essential. While AI-generated content can feel alarming, it can also elevate creative work. For example, in the film *The Brutalist*, AI was used to subtly improve actors' Hungarian dialects, enhancing authenticity without diminishing their skill and efforts to learn the language.

It's key to approach AI thoughtfully. You can't just delegate all your thinking. AI needs human guidance to be effective.

Olly: Agreed. I still validate things with colleagues rather than AI. I guess AI is like an extra and permanently available colleague, but not a replacement for human judgement.

Aaron: Exactly. AI is great at specific tasks, but humans need to stay in the loop. We use AI at Econify to speed up tasks like writing code, writing documentation, or doing repetitive boilerplate, but the real value comes from what humans add on top and we can achieve as a team.

Olly: How do we know when or how much to trust AI?

Aaron: Trusting AI requires caution and validation, AI can provide inaccuracies, especially on current events but the tech is getting better. Tools like ChatGPT's Deep Research aim to enhance reliability by citing sources and reducing hallucinations. However, users must remain critical, verifying information rather than blindly trusting outputs.

Olly: And there's certain things AI just can't replace, like meaningful connections and community spirit. That's what our app, events and socials enable, rely and thrive on. But I can see other areas where it can be revolutionary.

Aaron: It's significantly improving accessibility - like auto-generating subtitles on YouTube - and it has potential to solve even bigger problems, like improving medical diagnostics or streamlining critical research. The potential is always evolving.

Olly: I guess like a lot of things it's about testing, experimenting, failing fast and learning. I'm hopeful there's a lot of opportunity, for my generation and my children's. If AI is used responsibly.

Aaron: Absolutely. My advice? Start small. Use AI for low-stakes tasks - ask a question, draft an email, brainstorm ideas - and see how it could help you.

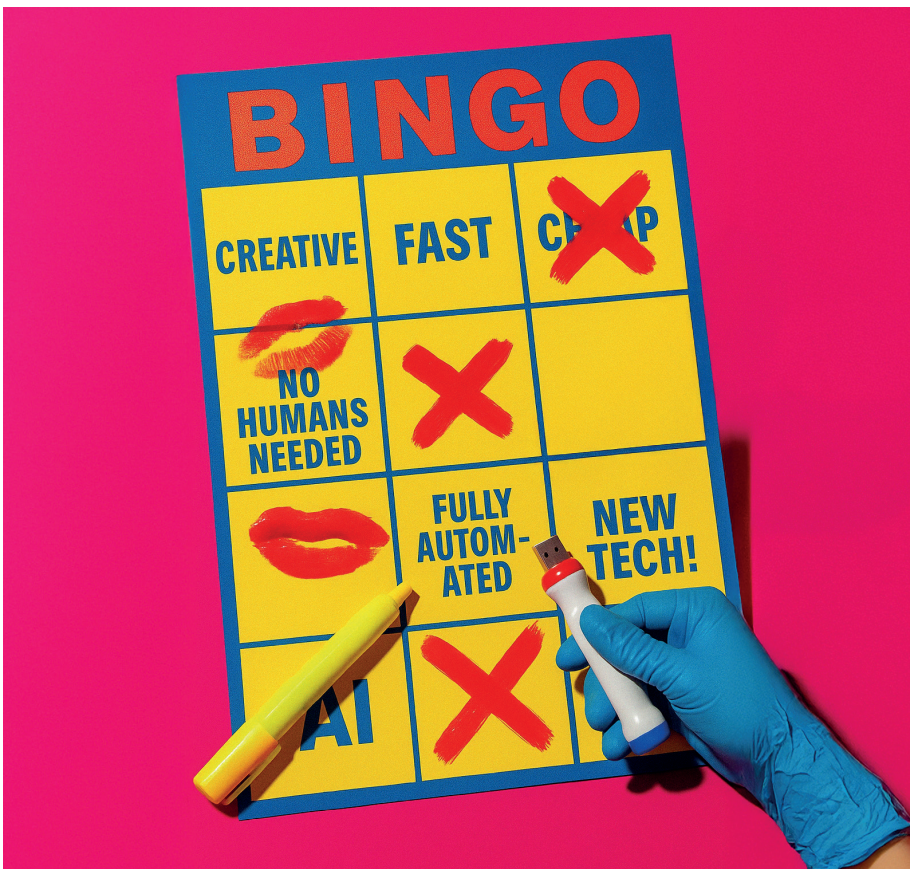


www.econify.com

MYTHBUSTERS CONTENT CREATION IN THE AGE OF AI

If you work in marketing, chances are you've felt the pressure to adopt AI tools. The promise of faster and cheaper content creation is everywhere. But is AI as revolutionary as it sounds, or are there some myths we need to bust?

In a recent webinar, Comtec, a B Corp localisation agency teamed up with fellow B Corp and copywriting experts, Thread, to explore five of the most common misconceptions about AI and provide much-needed clarity on what it can (and can't) do.



Myth 1: AI is new

AI might feel like the hottest new technology, but in reality, it's anything but. According to Comtec's James Brown, "AI in translation has actually been researched and refined for 70 years." What's truly new is accessibility. With widespread access available, usage figures show that 37% of people in the UK use AI for their work. But it's crucial to understand that we're still learning how to get the best from AI in everyday scenarios, even though it's been around for a long time.

Myth 2: AI doesn't need humans

One of the most dangerous myths is that AI can work independently without any human involvement. The truth is that AI needs humans at its core. James notes, "AI provides a foundation, but human oversight is critical for adding quality, creativity, and nuance—elements that AI alone can't achieve."

Myth 3: AI is always cheaper

It's easy to assume that AI will cut costs dramatically. But customisation and data preparation are key to getting good results, which involve time and money.

Sarah from Thread says, "The only way you see long-term cost savings is by investing upfront. Without a solid foundation, you may end up spending more on corrections later on."

When deciding whether AI is the cheaper option, consider the hidden costs of setup, training, and ongoing quality control.

Myth 4: AI is always faster

Speed is often considered one of AI's main advantages, but it's not always the case. If the foundational data isn't in place, AI might require significant human intervention, which ultimately cancels out the speed benefit.

"AI can be 1.5x to 5x faster than manual work—but only if the data is clean and the models are trained properly," explains Sarah. Customisation and continual adjustments are required to maintain efficiency; without these, AI can actually slow things down.

Myth 5: AI is creative

Creativity is inherently subjective—what one person finds groundbreaking, might be uninspired to another. Because of these subjective standards, AI's role in creativity is often misunderstood. As Sarah puts it, "AI is random, not creative. It's great at providing inspiration and generating a base, but the true creative process—imagination, emotional resonance, and the unique touch—still relies on humans."

AI is here to stay, but its role is to complement human creativity, not replace it.

Using AI effectively is about understanding its limitations, knowing when human input is essential, and investing time in setting up processes that work for your brand.

The key takeaway is that AI is a powerful tool—but not a magic solution. AI is just one part of the toolkit that can help enhance scale and efficiency when used correctly. Humans are, and will continue to remain, at the core of creating excellent content.

Comtec

Your language partner

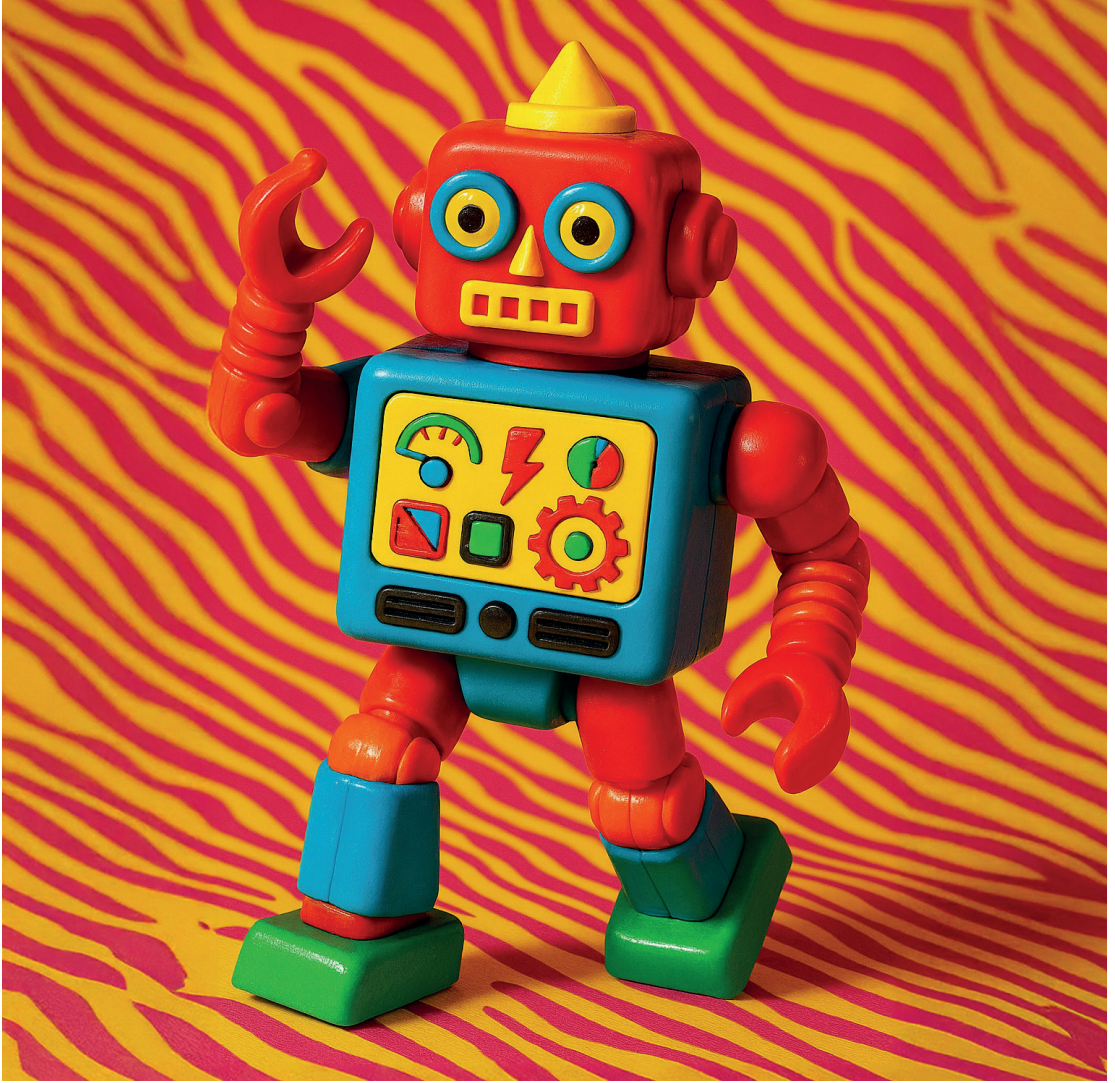
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Thread

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OPINION

DON'T FEAR THE BOT

Ben Jeffery,
Creative Director
useful-studio.co.uk

From spiritual guidance to sorting my brain out at 3am, AI has become more than just a tool. Here's what it's really like to co-create with it —and why I'm (cautiously) optimistic.

Everyone's terrified. Fair enough.

Fear of job losses. Fear of being replaced. Fear of becoming irrelevant. And sure, it's valid. Every new technology wave brings it. Mind you, this time it feels different—because AI isn't just another tool. It's intelligence itself.

But what if we're not on the brink of doom, just a weird, messy, creative renaissance?

Over the last two years for me, AI has become more than a work tool; it's helping me live better. The turning point came when I began using it to shape years of messy scribbles and raw ideas into content I could finally share. It was like having an editor, minus the judgment. It gave me unexpected confidence to open up, share publicly, and learn while doing so.

And here's a guilty admission: I use it for a lot—from gym routines to big life questions. I even trained a custom GPT on the teachings of Ram Dass—Ram Dass, reincarnate. Now, if overwhelmed, I ask him a question. And he gives me meditations, breathing exercises, or reminders to sit down and “peace out”. Strange? Absolutely. Wonderful? Surprisingly so.

When facing emotionally complex situations needing empathy, it gently guides by reflecting my thoughts back to me, helping me see clearly. During my year-end review, I even used AI to envision my future. Now I have an AI accountability partner nudging me towards my goals. Cheers mate!

There's also the creative fear. That AI might replace artists, writers, and designers. But I see it differently: for me it democratises creativity. Anyone can now paint, write, or create. It's liberating. Now my only limitation is my own imagination, not my client's budget. I can quickly visualise any idea in a second (although it's rarely quite right).



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HOW I USE AI (WITHOUT LOSING MYSELF)

- 1 Lead with your own ideas. AI is your assistant, not your author.
- 2 My system: Human → AI → Human. Rinse. Repeat.
- 3 AI loves verbosity. Cut the fluff.
- 5 It's lazy. It defaults to the obvious. Push it. Make it think deeper.

But yes, it's terrifying if you rely on creativity for a living. But I choose empowerment over fear. Kind of.

Still, let's not get lazy—most AI-generated ideas are codswallop. Dull. Obvs. You can smell it: the fake cleverness, the forced eloquence, the overuse of words like “seamless,” “fostering,” or anything remotely “akin.” It's the voice of AI BrAln—popcorn-flavoured insight with no nutritional value. Trite, verbose, empty. Because AI doesn't genuinely think, it remixes the average from the internet. Real creativity demands taste, human quirks, and actual emotion.

My workflow? Human first, AI second. I brain dump rawness anywhere—in transit, at 3 am, half-awake on a train. Then AI helps shape it—keeping it 98% me, just tighter. After that, I carve, tweak, add a bit here, cut a bit there, making it fully mine again.

My real fear isn't AI replacing us; it's us handing over our thinking to become passive consumers and creators of synthetic garbage. AI guff.

But what should we do? Don't resist out of pride or fear, but don't surrender either. Use AI as a tool, a mirror, a guide—but remember you're holding the pen.

This article began as a messy brain dump. AI didn't write it; it helped shape it. Because the ideas must be ours—but we're allowed an editor.

AI won't make you. But it might just help you become more of who you already are.

Because the real question isn't what AI will do. But what you will do with it.

Brain Dump Over... And out... :)

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letting you know what's on, and amplifying the amazing activity we see going on across our network and beyond.
Next quarter.....this could be you!



Get in touch
to share
your ideas!

AI DEMYSTIFIED: YOUTUBE Q&A

AI is evolving at a rapid pace, and people have more questions than ever. Being obsessed with learning, I found one of the best minds in the field—Jordan Legg, Founder & Chief AI Officer at takara.ai - to help break it all down. We gathered the most pressing AI questions from our community and got answers straight from the expert.

Fast forward six months later, and everything has changed. AI moves so fast that some of these answers may already be outdated. Got more questions? Drop them in the comments! If we get enough, we'll do a Part 2 to update this discussion.

Kiana Kamalian, Creative Director and Producer, member at x+why Unity Place.
Scan to watch:



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AI MEETS NATURE: HOW OLOMBRIA IS REDEFINING POLLINATION AND BIO-PEST CONTROL

In the race for a sustainable future, Olombria looks to nature. Using AI and the natural behavior of hoverflies, they're revolutionising pollination and bio-pest control. Hoverflies pollinate over 30% of crops, protect against aphids, and—fun fact—flies are the only pollinators of cacao trees, so no flies, no chocolate.



Olombria's AI tracks insect pollinators, providing data to improve pollinator health. They rear native fly species and create lures to enhance efficiency, boosting pollination alongside bees. These insects also reduce pests, cutting chemical use and supporting healthier crops.

By blending AI with nature, Olombria isn't just improving agriculture—they're future-proofing it.

Olombria, member at x+why
Chiswick Works

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Deploi is an AI-powered background checking solution for the frontline workforce. Carers, teachers, security officers, cleaners and many other industries that you'll come into contact with every day, have to go through extensive and robust background checks to perform vital public duty. These checks can often take months, due to the manual and repetitive processes

that power them. At Deploi, we believe that agentic AI is the perfect solution to turn these processes into tasks that can take seconds. We see a more equitable future for the frontline, where they are empowered to develop and progress their careers due to the speed in which they can access work.

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Find our AI Manifesto at
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Y CORNER

THERAPY – REAL OR ROBOT? LOOKING AFTER ME, X+WHY WELLBEING PARTNERS

Look no further than our wealth of literature, drama, and song lyrics expressing euphoria, despair and angst about human relationships and emotions, to recognise the mysterious biological complexities that defy logic and connect us all.

And there's the phrase - "defy logic."

AI systems, based on algorithms and data inputs, are devoid of the nuances of empathy, compassion and understanding, and lack the moral compass that guides human actions. For this reason, humans are always going to provide better therapy than AI.

Only a human therapist can recognise deeper patterns, challenge irrational thoughts and offer insights that go beyond scripted responses. The connection between humans in the counselling process is a very special one, requiring mutual trust and respect.

Maybe it's a good time to recognise the amazing capacity of humanity at its best, when everyone is valued and understood. Combined with the powerful advantages of AI - the future should be exciting!

Is your future looking good?

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