

# The KEEP IT REAL GUIDE to AI in content

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The smart approach to using AI for content creation – from a global copywriting and content agency.







# Avoiding the AI content trap

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**The promise of generative AI for business is huge. More content, less effort. Better reach, lower cost. It sounds ideal. But turning the hype into real results is proving harder than expected. And while technology has transformed what's possible, it hasn't changed what works. AI can automate parts of content creation but like any tool, it needs to be used wisely and expertly to avoid trade-offs in quality or engagement.**

In [one recent survey](#), half of consumers said they believed they could spot AI-generated content and 52% said they became less engaged when they suspect that's the case. AI might save time and money, but if the result feels generic or off-brand you don't just risk sounding like everyone else, you risk engagement, and that hits your bottom line.



When deployed strategically, AI has enormous potential to support brilliant content creation. The challenge is identifying what that looks like for your organisation. Right now, 71% of marketers say they're already using generative AI, or planned to by the end of 2024. As AI adoption grows, so does the pressure to prove its worth. For many, the challenge isn't generating content. It's using AI to create something that drives competitive advantage.

**71%** of marketers in 2024 said they're already using (or are planning to use) generative AI.

Many people fall into the AI content trap: the gap between the promise of AI and the processes and considerations required to make it deliver. Used carelessly, AI leads to content that's forgettable, formulaic and out of step with your brand. But if you use it strategically as a tool to research, structure or refine content, it becomes an effort multiplier.

**In this guide, we'll show you how to avoid the AI content trap altogether. We'll explore how to combine the speed and scale of AI with the insight and creativity of human writers, so your content works harder, sets you apart and stays true to your brand.**





And one more thing before we get going...

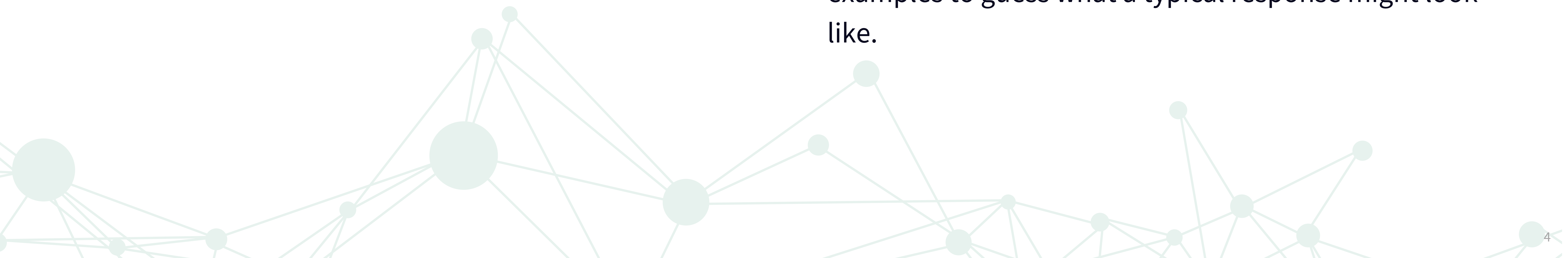


# How does AI produce content?

**At a high level, AI creates content by predicting what comes next – one word at a time.**

Most content tools are powered by large language models (LLMs), which have been trained on huge volumes of online text – books, websites, reports, articles, and more. These models learn the patterns of language: how words and phrases are typically used in different contexts.

So when you give an AI tool a prompt like “write a blog post about cybersecurity for retailers”, it doesn’t ‘understand’ the topic the way a person does. Instead, it draws on patterns it has seen across billions of examples to guess what a typical response might look like.





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PART ONE

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# Why AI content fails to connect.





Ask an AI model how to make an omelette, and it will write accurate instructions faster than you can break eggs. But expect it to write a sentence that stirs emotion or inspires action and it will probably fall short.

AI generated content often fails to connect for four reasons...



# 1 Lack of personality

When speaking for your brand, human writers use their creative instincts and unique perspectives to interpret the nuances of your style guide and tone of voice guidelines. They'll identify places to weave in your organisation's values, mission and vision where it makes sense – bringing your brand to life in a way that people can believe in and remember.

“Generative AI cannot think for itself, so it's not trying to relate or innovate; it's reaching for familiarity.”

An AI content generator, by contrast, has no personality of its own. It complies by scouring its dataset for words that fit the stereotypes of a chatty, professional or inspirational tone. The result? Coherent prose that's also inherently generic and often forgettable. Generative AI cannot think for itself, so it's not trying to relate or innovate; it's reaching for familiarity. This is fine for content like guides or product descriptors, but not for standout thought leadership pieces that share insights unique to your organisation.

# 2 Lack of cultural context and nuance

Humans are biased, so it's not surprising that technology trained on data generated, selected, processed and refined by humans is similarly flawed.

Researchers at the University of Southern California studied the databases that various large language models (LLM) use, and found that as much as 38.6% of training data could contain biased language. There are many ways this bias could start showing up in your content, for example:

- **Financial advice that alienates people on lower incomes**
- **Tech copy that implies digital literacy is exclusive to younger generations**
- **Job descriptions that subtly discourage certain groups from applying**

Unlike humans, who use context and empathy to avoid causing offence, AI applies uniform rules to data to generate consistent results. Its immense computing power means it can pick up minor biases that humans know to avoid and amplify them at speed and scale. The output can perpetuate unconscious biases humans have worked hard to consciously screen out.



# 2

According to a study by [University College London](#), humans are more likely to internalise bias from AI models than from other humans, perhaps because they perceive the technology to be more objective.

Fundamentally, AI doesn't have the understanding and empathy to consider the impact of its words. A stark example of this is [Tessa, a wellness chatbot](#). It was introduced by the U.S. National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) as an intended replacement for its helpline. But it was quickly pulled after it began advising users on weight loss.



# 3 Lack of engagement

Humans have survived for millennia through storytelling. It's given us an inherent desire for connection and thirst for a novel turn of phrase. We know that using a juicy anecdote helps readers swallow a dry statistic and occasionally breaking grammar rules keeps audiences hooked. While they can't crunch information as fast as an LLM, experienced writers will intuitively know which information matters and how to convey this to a target audience in a way that engages their emotions.

Generative AI is a stickler for rules and consensus. Despite its processing power, it is often far from the frontier of debate and sometimes misses the point altogether. Professor Haoran Chu, co-author of a study published in the Journal of Communication, commented that:

“AI is good at writing something that is consistent, logical and coherent. But it is still weaker at writing engaging stories than people are.”

Readers can't always identify AI-generated content, but [research shows](#) they are biased against it, perceiving it to be less trustworthy or engaging. Whether your content is AI-assisted or not, it's important to know that audiences dislike unoriginal content. Content that simply sounds like AI can make your brand seem less credible.



# 4 Lack of oversight

Generative AI is unfailingly confident but frequently wrong. Rather than looking for a direct source like a human would, it discerns patterns in large datasets and generates text based on the probability of one word following another. Faced with a lack of real-world data, it may fill the gap with false but plausible information. AI hallucinations have caught out big brands, lawyers and even AI-specialist university professors, showing how hard they can be to spot.

Even when the information is factually correct, AI may have used data sources that humans would recognise as:

- **Outdated**
- **Skewed**
- **Irrelevant**
- **Offensive**
- **Not credible**

Without human oversight of content's accuracy, companies risk sharing misinformation that damages stakeholder trust. One unchecked or inaccurate story seems harmless. But if it becomes the norm, this poor-quality content will soon be used as AI training data for future models. Researchers believe this cycle will compound errors and bias, leading ultimately to 'model collapse' and a complete breakdown of quality and output accuracy. What this demonstrates is that human insight will always be vital to introduce thought, assure quality and protect content integrity.





# BIG AI TRENDS TO WATCH

The world of AI is evolving fast. Here are a few emerging trends that will impact content creation.



## AI agents

Persistent AI tools that can take on tasks over time, not just respond to one-off prompts. For example, an AI assistant trained on your content style could help you prep campaign briefs weekly.

## Multimodal AI

Generative models that can handle text, image, video and audio all at once. Expect to see more tools supporting visual content creation and video scripting.

## Deep research assistants

Tools that don't just summarise content but analyse it across multiple sources and extract useful insights. These solutions are ideal for strategy teams looking to get real insights into a topic or industry.

## In-tool AI integration

AI features will continue to be baked into the software you're already using, such as CMS, email platforms, DAMs, and analytics dashboards.





Where AI delivers the  
most value in the  
content cycle.



**If content creation is 20% inspiration, 80% perspiration, then AI can certainly help with the heavy lifting.**

Content creators don't just sit down at their laptop, complete a draft and then fire it off. There are lots of steps in the creative process to ensure quality, like prior research, ideation and stakeholder interviews and post-draft, like reviews, editing and proofreading.

The key is to deploy AI's speed and processing power in ways that support the creative part of the process – not automate it.

Here are four stages of the content cycle where AI capabilities can enhance and streamline the creative process to deliver faster and better outputs.







# IDEATION & RESEARCH

Despite lacking original thought, AI can be a powerful springboard for inspiration and discovery.

As brainstorming allies, externally trained models can rapidly scan the internet and find topical angles in a sea of news articles, scientific papers and industry conversations.

Models with access to your in-house files can be prompted to trawl content calendars, reports and marketing strategies in search of content hooks on different themes or topics.

Time-intensive tasks like market research are ideal candidates for automation. Task your AI agents with monitoring news feeds, research libraries or competitor websites and flagging relevant developments. It's even possible (with the right tools and prompts) to get your agents to track and analyse the engagement metrics of your content or competitors' and identify fresh angles based on content that has performed well in the past.

Once you've chosen a topic to explore, AI systems can answer your questions on it and pull out contextually relevant insights, citing references for you to fact-check. Some tools offer 'deep research' and 'reasoning' functionality that can help you explore niche areas or solve problems in complex datasets, generating detailed explanations and even hypotheses. Others specialise in searching particular channels and formats such as audio, pdfs, social media and academic papers.



A background image of a smiling man with glasses in a meeting, with other people blurred in the background.

# SUMMARISING & STRUCTURING INFORMATION

Information overload can paralyse human writers, especially when they need to consult multiple long and complex resources.

AI excels at helping humans gather their thoughts in quick time, by rapidly scanning and distilling masses of information. For example it can:

- **Transcribe:** turning video and audio content into text resources
- **Summarise:** making scannable the key takeaways from lengthy or complex resources such as interview transcripts, scientific papers and reports
- **Explain:** answering questions related to content and highlighting relevant parts of the content to provide context
- **Analyse gaps:** using set criteria to identify missing information or flag follow up actions, such as chasing information promised on a call
- **Brief:** creating instructions for writers to follow
- **Propose structure:** identifying connections in your resources and suggesting logical, structured outlines based on key themes
- **Develop:** expanding on summaries and outlines to provide more substance before the writing begins





# FIRST DRAFTS & REFINEMENT

Stress, fatigue, distractions, perfectionism, fear of failure – the common causes of writer's block don't impact AI.

In human terms, AI remains in a permanent flow state, with no need to mull things over or 'sleep on it'. This means human creators can exploit AI to kickstart the writing process, for example by generating:

- **Literary devices**, such as analogies, metaphors, idioms or proverbs that may help them find a route into the story in a way that will connect with readers
- **Rough drafts**, that writers can use to get over the fear of a blank page, making it easier for them to get into the flow with their own ideas and style

Once humans have crafted and polished copy, they may be able to leverage AI's capabilities to improve clarity and fine-tune the content, for example:

- Correcting spelling and grammatical errors
- Suggesting alternatives to awkward phrasing
- Incorporating keywords that optimise content for search engines and generating SEO-friendly meta descriptions and title tags

AI can be trained on your house style, enabling it to propose copy revisions based on tone of voice guidance or brand identity manuals.

Still, it is vital to understand that none of these jobs can be left entirely to the robots. This is a critical stage of the copy creation process, and allowing errors or bad, generic writing to creep into your draft or outline could quickly undermine your hard work.





A piece of content that's original, targeted, impactful and well-written will always stand out from the crowd.

While human creativity is essential to crafting quality content, AI can help unlock its full value, boosting its reach, ROI and effectiveness. This could take the form of:

- **Personalising** it to resonate with different readers according to their interests, behaviours, demographics or geographical locations
- **Shortening** it to create snappy blog posts, social media posts and captions
- **Developing and expanding** it to create more in-depth pieces such as white papers and reports
- **Reformatting** it to create videos, podcasts, animations or infographics from text
- **Adapting and repurposing content** at a speed and scale previously unimaginable, freeing up human writers to focus on the quality



# DEEP DIVE:

How to make the most of AI prompts.

“

Without quality control, organisations risk churning out a barrage of “blah, blah, blah” that erodes value.

”

Ruth Wood, Writer & AI Taskforce member at Stratton Craig

Here are four ways to get the benefits of this technology without sacrificing quality, authenticity and integrity.

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1

## HIGH QUALITY INPUTS

Providing an AI model with language references, such as ‘tone of voice guidelines’ or examples of what ‘good’ looks like can set it up for success.

2

## FACT-CHECKING

Ask your LLM to cite its sources, and check those sources are reputable and up-to-date, ideally by cross-referencing them with other credible sources.

3

## BIAS SCREENING

It’s important that your content creators know how to spot bias in AI content, including subtle ‘microaggressions’ that could add up to more blatant discrimination in future.

4

## THE HUMAN TOUCH

Google does not penalise AI-generated content per se, but its rankings do prioritise “helpful, reliable, people-first content”. Who knows if content is helpful, reliable and people-first? Why, people, of course!

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[READ THE FULL BLOG HERE](#)



# Setting the guardrails for AI-supported content creation.



To get the real benefits of AI, you need more than just access to the technology. You need the right processes, governance and capabilities in place.

This isn't about slowing things down. It's about scaling with confidence. When you set the right guardrails, AI becomes an asset rather than a liability.





# GUIDELINES

**Before setting AI to work, you need to lay the foundations. There are two sides to this.**

First, you need information to feed your AI. Without a well-defined tone of voice, messaging framework and robust examples of ‘what good looks like’, your content may not sound like ‘you’ and could fail to connect with your audience. Setting these guardrails should be a top priority.

Second, you must have clear processes for reviewing and approving AI-assisted outputs, ensuring compliance with data privacy laws, avoiding copyright issues and maintaining accuracy.

Essentially, you must apply at least the same level of rigour you would to any other part of your marketing strategy.

“Without a well-defined tone of voice or brand framework, your content may not sound like ‘you’.”



# SKILLS

Your team needs to have the right skills to be able to use AI effectively and troubleshoot when issues arise. Making sure everyone has a basic level of AI literacy will ensure they're using it in a safe and effective way.

**At the very least, your team should understand how to:**

1. Write good prompts
2. Refine AI outputs
3. Troubleshoot

**1 Write good prompts**  
Writing instructions for AI, or 'prompt engineering', is a skill in itself. We all know that just typing in "write a blog about renewable energy" will produce extremely generic outputs. Especially for more complex tasks, having a well-structured, clear prompt is the key to unlocking time savings. In many ways, an effective prompt is like an effective creative brief – providing detailed instructions, relevant context and defining the tone, audience and format to avoid endless amends, or prompting back-and-forth.

## 2 Refine AI outputs

Even with the right prompt, it's rare that AI-generated content captures all of your requirements the first time. Teams need the skills to critically evaluate and edit AI outputs, which involves correcting factual errors, adjusting tone, improving structure and ensuring the final content reflects your brand's personality and values.

This skill isn't just important for creatives. Marketing, sales and customer service teams can optimise their working hours by editing AI-generated outputs. Making sure they understand how to avoid some of the tell-tale signs of AI-generated content is important too.

## 3 Troubleshoot

We've all been there. The prompt seems accurate. The source documents are correct. But AI still can't produce what you want. It can feel easier to abandon the tool and do it all yourself or switch to a new provider, only to run into the same roadblocks.

If AI isn't meeting your expectations, it's important to analyse why to stop both teams and technology from making the same mistakes.

That means identifying weaknesses in your prompting approach, recognising where the model's limitations are showing and experimenting with different approaches. Strong troubleshooting skills turn a poor result into a learning opportunity.



# TRANSPARENCY

Transparency and authenticity matter more than ever in the age of AI.

The Marketing Interactive study showed that 63% of consumers say they'd rather know when content has been created by AI. That's a clear signal: audiences don't just care about what they're consuming, they care about how it was made.

Clear disclosure builds trust, reinforces credibility, and shows your brand has nothing to hide.

But transparency is also important internally. Your teams need to understand when and how AI is being used in your content workflows. That includes being clear about which tools are approved, how outputs should be reviewed and which data should never be shared.

Feeding sensitive or proprietary information into public AI tools like ChatGPT poses serious risks, including loss of IP or compliance breaches. If you're serious about using AI at scale, exploring enterprise-grade solutions that offer more control, security and governance is essential.

63%

of consumers say they'd rather know when content has been created by AI.



# “AI SPEAK” TO WATCH OUT FOR

One of the biggest giveaways of AI-generated content is its tone. Even the most advanced tools often fall back on generic, overly polished phrasing that lacks originality or emotional punch.

Here are a few common patterns to flag in your QA process:

## Overused clichés

- “Revolutionising the way we...”
- “In today’s fast-paced digital world...”
- “Unlock the full potential of...”

## Corporate filler

- “Seamlessly integrate...”
- “Cutting-edge solutions tailored to your needs”
- “Empowering teams to drive success”

## Formulaic CTAs

- “Don’t miss out!”
- “Take your business to the next level.”
- “Experience the future of [industry] today.”



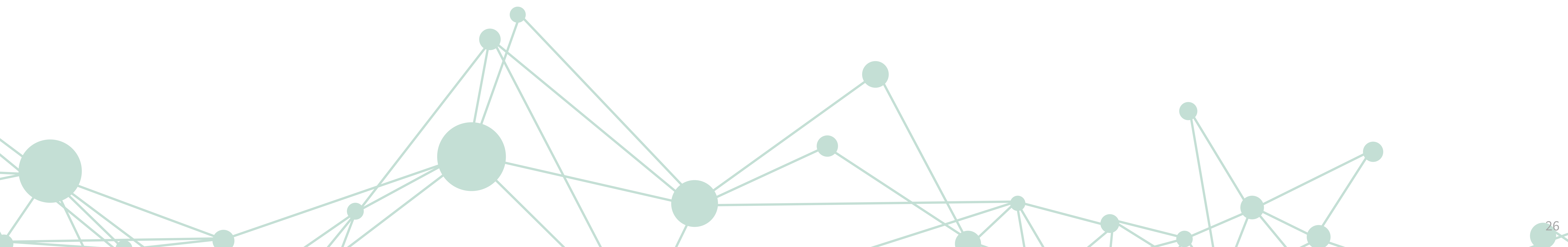
# Making the most of AI in content creation.



AI is set to become a big part of content creation over the next few years. Blending AI efficiency with the right level of human oversight is likely to be a process of trial and error. Get it right and you'll set yourself apart with thoughtful content that puts less strain on your team.

So how do you get it right? Fundamentally, your AI rollout must be tailored to your own content creation process. The aim is to implement it in a way that amplifies what you do well and reduces some of the challenges your teams face.

Implementing AI in your content operations can feel like a big overhaul – so let's break it down into a structured approach based on smaller, manageable steps.





# 1. IDENTIFY RELEVANT USE CASES

To find the right use cases for AI in your content processes, start by going back to the drawing board.

From ideation to briefing to writing to distribution, map out your entire production process and what happens when one stage moves into another. From there, you can highlight the relevant tasks that are causing content bottlenecks. Is ideation taking too long? Do teams struggle to find the time to properly brief writers? Or does everyone have their own way of doing it, leading to inconsistent outputs that take longer to edit?

# 2. SET UP GUIDELINES AND GUARDRAILS

Proper systems of governance are fundamental to using AI in a safe, compliant way. If your teams begin sharing confidential information with public LLMs, you could quickly find yourself in legal trouble.

Before rolling out AI for specific use cases, take the time to define how it should be used, and where the lines are drawn. Set clear content standards covering tone of voice, brand style, accuracy and fact-checking expectations. At the same time, put technical and ethical guardrails in place. You need to think about data privacy, bias mitigation, transparency and the level of human oversight required.



## IMPLEMENTING AI IN YOUR CONTENT

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### 3. TEST AND TRAIN

With your use cases defined and guidelines set, it's time to explore how AI could help solve them. Start small and scale up from each success. Roll AI out in a controlled environment and tackle a set number of tasks to get people familiar with the trial and error needed for creating AI solutions. Try getting AI to handle simpler, low-stakes tasks first, like writing a newsletter, drafting internal emails or summarising a transcript, to build confidence.

### 4. EVALUATE

Human oversight and quality assurance is mission critical at every step of an AI-enabled workflow. Your customers, clients and other stakeholders should not be seeing AI-generated content that hasn't been checked thoroughly first.

With your first drafts done, it's time to critically assess the outcomes. Set firm criteria for evaluation, which could cover things like accuracy, quality, adherence to brand guidelines and how easy the task would be to replicate. This initial phase of testing can help make further improvements to your AI processes based on feedback.



# 5. SCALE AND MONITOR

Having established some initial use cases and learnt from them, you can now start to scale up your AI approach more broadly. But remember – ongoing monitoring remains key for sharing knowledge and experience.





CONCLUSION

AI is a tool, not a  
shortcut.



## AI IS A TOOL, NOT A SHORTCUT.

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**AI has already changed the content game and its still-untapped potential is enormous. Businesses are feeling the pressure to make it truly work for them, without compromising creativity or losing their brand voice. No matter how smart AI becomes, the fundamentals of great content won't change. AI can help you move faster and enhance your creative processes, but it's not a replacement for strategic thinking, creative judgment or brand insight.**

“80% of creative roles will need to integrate generative AI into their working processes over the next few years.”

Gartner

According to Gartner, 80% of creative roles will need to integrate generative AI into working processes over the next few years. This isn't just a passing trend and AI will be a core part of how content gets made. In both our professional and personal lives, we are all moving into a new phase of digital content empowerment.

As the technology becomes more embedded in day-to-day work, developing AI fluency will be essential. It will be a core skill for marketers, writers and strategists alike. To get real value from AI, you need to understand where it can fit into your existing processes as an enabler of smarter, more efficient ways of working – and, conversely, where humans should be doing most of the work.





For content and marketing teams under pressure to drive efficiencies and prove content's ROI, this shift requires structure. Human-in-the-loop processes, proper QA and brand governance aren't just nice to have – they're how you protect trust, maintain quality and create content that always delivers.

Great content will always be about connection, and that isn't going to change. AI can accelerate how you get there, but it can't replace the human insight that makes your message land. The brands that stand out in the coming years will be the ones that use AI to enhance, not replace, their creativity, understanding and strategic focus.

**As a business you should be using AI to save time and strengthen your thinking. It would be short-sighted not to. But it would be an even bigger mistake to rely on it blindly. You risk losing the originality, insight and strategic focus that makes great content worth reading in the first place.**



Stratton Craig is a strategic content partner. We help clients forge real connections that cut through complexity.

By combining deep understanding of human behaviour with our relentless pursuit of clarity, we create powerful narratives and content strategies that drive change and action.

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