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If you're not thinking about your company's AI strategy, your competition is

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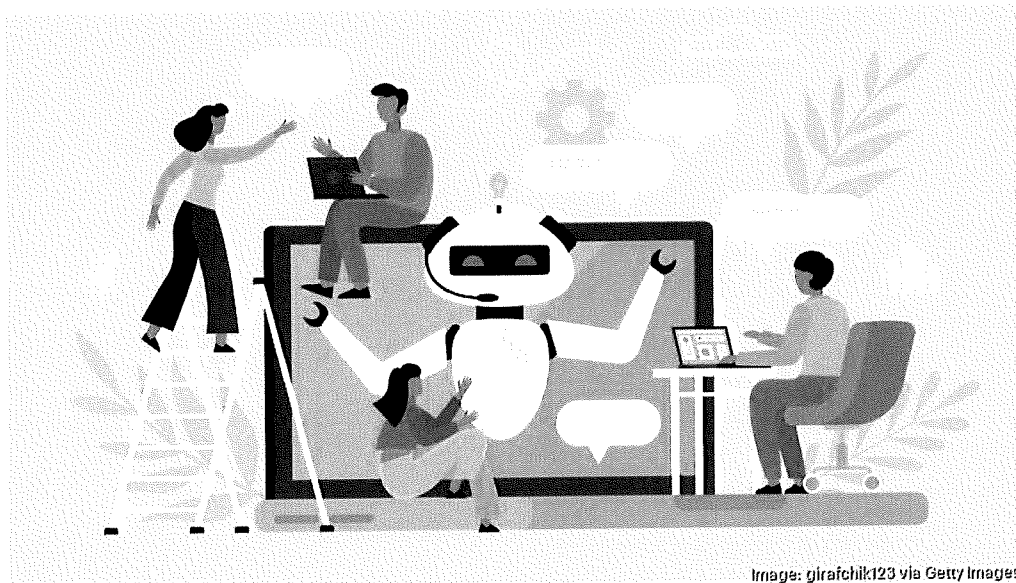


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Many small-business owners are already embracing AI tools like ChatGPT.

When talking last week with a group of business owners about ChatGPT, I couldn't help but think back to Nov. 7, 1998.

That was the day we got access to the internet at my childhood house in rural Alabama. I only remember the exact date because I remember one of the first things I did was read an article about Michigan State's upset of No.1 Ohio State in college football.

I don't remember which specific websites I visited. I don't remember the first email I sent. The only thing I remember was being amazed by the ability to communicate so quickly with people around the world.

Five years later, I'd still come across businesses with little to no digital presence that were performing just fine. I actually worked for one in college.

When talking about the potential effects of ChatGPT and artificial intelligence on businesses, my mind kept thinking about how long it took many businesses to embrace the internet.

Considering the drastic changes it ushered in, the early days of the internet were relatively forgiving for late adopters in many industries.

Businesses will have significantly less cushion with AI. The data suggests companies that haven't yet waded into AI are already behind the eight ball.

According to McKinsey & Co., adoption of AI more than doubled between 2017 and 2022, with 50% of companies saying they'd adopted AI in at least one business unit or function in 2022.

That was before ChatGPT rose to prominence. All indications suggest even more businesses and executives are now buying in and carving out their niches. One survey of business leaders by Resumebuilder.com found 25% of respondents said ChatGPT had already saved them \$75,000 or more.

The takeaway? If your business isn't working on a plan for AI right now, you need to be — because your competition likely is.

Businesses need to be thinking about how AI could affect every facet of their business, and that means more than just thinking "How can we use AI?"

It also means, “How will someone else’s use of AI — maybe even someone we don’t consider a competitor today — affect us?”

The exercise will take considerable imagination. In 1985, who would have predicted that, within just a few decades, a phone could replace a camera, a cassette player, a computer and hand-held GPS devices? The latter didn’t even exist on the retail market at the time.

Positioning your company for success in the AI world will mean identifying significant challenges and opportunities that often aren’t visible today.

But, as experts have told us, there’s a difference between preparing for AI and rushing into any one specific AI product.

Whether it’s ChatGPT or other AI platforms, they are going to change and evolve in the weeks, months and years to come.

With that in mind, experts say companies need to be assessing the different options that are out there and strategizing about where they could fit into their business.

They also need to be thinking about their specific roles and business functions to see how AI could improve processes or cut labor costs — something many businesses are already doing. They should be thinking about how AI factors into the skills they are looking for or training for. Being able to quickly engineer the right prompts in AI will likely be a critical skill moving forward.

But businesses also need to familiarize themselves with the regulatory implications of AI.

Employers, for example, need to tread very carefully with AI in the recruiting and hiring space. They also need to be wary of unproven providers offering AI products that seem too good to be true.

We’ve known for years that AI was going to be a significant disruptor to the economy. That hasn’t changed.

What has changed is the steep acceleration in adoption by businesses and executives across a wide range of industries, with ChatGPT being a huge catalyst.

AI is a high-stakes issue for businesses, and those that aren't taking steps to prepare for it are playing a dangerous game.

Rest assured, if you're not thinking about how AI could change your business, someone else is.




Ty West

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