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Personal AI Assistant

HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE COULD SAVE YOU HOURS ON ADMIN AND DO YOUR 'THINKING'

TECHNOLOGY

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Time-poor Aussies are turning to artificial intelligence to tackle life admin and get more hours back in their day.

ChatGPT – which has been trained on massive amounts of data scraped from the internet pre-2022 and is freely accessible online – generates human-like text in response to natural language prompts.

It has left universities scrambling to stop students submitting AI-generated essays, while companies race to integrate the technology into their own tools and applications.

Although most users have been generating fun personalised poems and short stories for a laugh, productivity coach Donna McGeorge says the real value is in using ChatGPT as a personal assistant. “We are in an epidemic of burnout and overwhelm, and it’s like a mental Thermomix – it can do the basic stuff while you are doing other things,” she says.

Here are five ways to leverage ChatGPT as a personal assistant:

1 PLAN MEALS

Asking the chat bot for “a healthy meal plan for a family of four” will generate breakfast, lunch and dinner ideas for Monday to Friday. Users can also be more specific – for example, stipulating they are vegetarian or lactose intolerant.

McGeorge has used ChatGPT to come up with recipes based on the food in her fridge.

“I told it ‘I’ve got lamb, potatoes, mustard and sesame seeds’, and it gave me a nice recipe that sounded lovely,” she says.

2 PLAN HOLIDAYS

Users can ask for a holiday itinerary, giving only vague locations and time frames and receive a full stop-by-stop plan that includes travel times and sights to see.

While this information is also available online, McGeorge says the appeal is not needing to search then



Donna McGeorge uses the much-hyped artificial intelligence tool chatGPT as a form of personal assistant. Picture: Nigel Hallett

trawl through multiple websites and blogs. “If you say to ChatGPT, ‘I am taking a family of five to Rome, we are doing it on a budget’, it will spit out a plan in 10 seconds,” she says. “I think it will completely make Google obsolete.”

3 KIDS ACTIVITIES

ChatGPT can also be used to quickly brainstorm ideas, from “Fun games for a children’s birthday party” to “Ways to teach children about the environment”. George says the tool is good for “outsourcing thinking”.

4 APPLY FOR JOBS

Many people are confident in their suitability for a role but struggle to communicate that in a cover letter.

Users can tell ChatGPT the role they are applying for then copy and paste their work experience from their LinkedIn profile, and receive a draft cover letter in 10 seconds.

McGeorge says sentences produced by ChatGPT typically “lacks warmth” but can be a helpful first draft that is then edited to become more personal or specific.

5 KICKSTART PROJECTS

If you have ever wanted to launch a business or write a book but not known how to start, ChatGPT can produce draft business pitches and plans or chapter outlines.

For example, “write me a business plan for my business which will sell hand-made children’s clothes that are really bright with the fabrics ethically sourced and hypo-allergenic” generates a 450-word plan with subheadings, including executive summary, business description, products and services, marketing and sales, operations, financial projections, management team and conclusion.

While the information is vague because the bot does not know the ins and outs of the business, having a template can help overcome initial mental block.

McGeorge, who has written many books on time management including *The 1 Day Refund*, used ChatGPT to generate an outline for her next book on short-term activity for long-term results.

“The outline is the toughest bit

and I’m going to use it as a starting point,” she says.

“It gave me eight chapters with three key points in each one.”

McGeorge also writes regular blogs and says ChatGPT has halved her writing time.

“It used to take me two to three hours to get a rough draft (blog) or outline done, now it’s taking me about an hour to get close to a full article,” she says.

BEWARE THE TIME VORTEX

Although ChatGPT can save time on basic administrative tasks, Time Stylers founder Kate Christie says it can also become a time vacuum.

“Once you start asking questions, you can get sucked into the vortex,” she says.

“It’s like deciding to be on Facebook for 20 minutes then you realise you have been there for an hour and a half.”

“Like any productivity technology, you need to use it with discipline or else it defeats the purpose of speeding things up.”

How does it work?

ChatGPT clocked more than one million users within a week of its launch at the end of November.

It’s dominating news and social media feeds, with many people labelling it a “game-changer”. It’s an online tool that allows users to have a conversation with an artificially intelligent robot.

When asked to describe itself, it says “ChatGPT is a large language model trained by OpenAI that can respond to a wide range of natural language inputs, with the ability to understand and generate human-like text with context. It can be used for tasks such as text completion, question answering and language translation.”

CSIRO Data61 director Jon Whittle says the tool was trained on a large amount of data from the internet, then went through a process of humans ranking responses to refine the style.

It includes an algorithm that identifies patterns such as what word comes next in a sentence.

“In its essence, it is crunching a whole lot of data and putting it through a complex large-scale algorithm, looking for patterns, then feeding that back to you.”

How to use it

Set up an account via chat.openai.com/chat then start making requests, written the way you would speak to a person.

If you are not satisfied with the response, you can regenerate it or make specific requests for changes – for example, asking for a shorter response, more detail or friendlier tone. ChatGPT is not currently connected to the internet so cannot produce, for example, movie screening times or updates on news events.

Word of warning

Whittle says it is important to not take AI responses as fact or publish responses without checking them.

“ChatGPT presents information that may or may not be correct but in a way that sounds credible,” he says. “Use it more as a collaborative tool or a good way of finding inspiration.”