

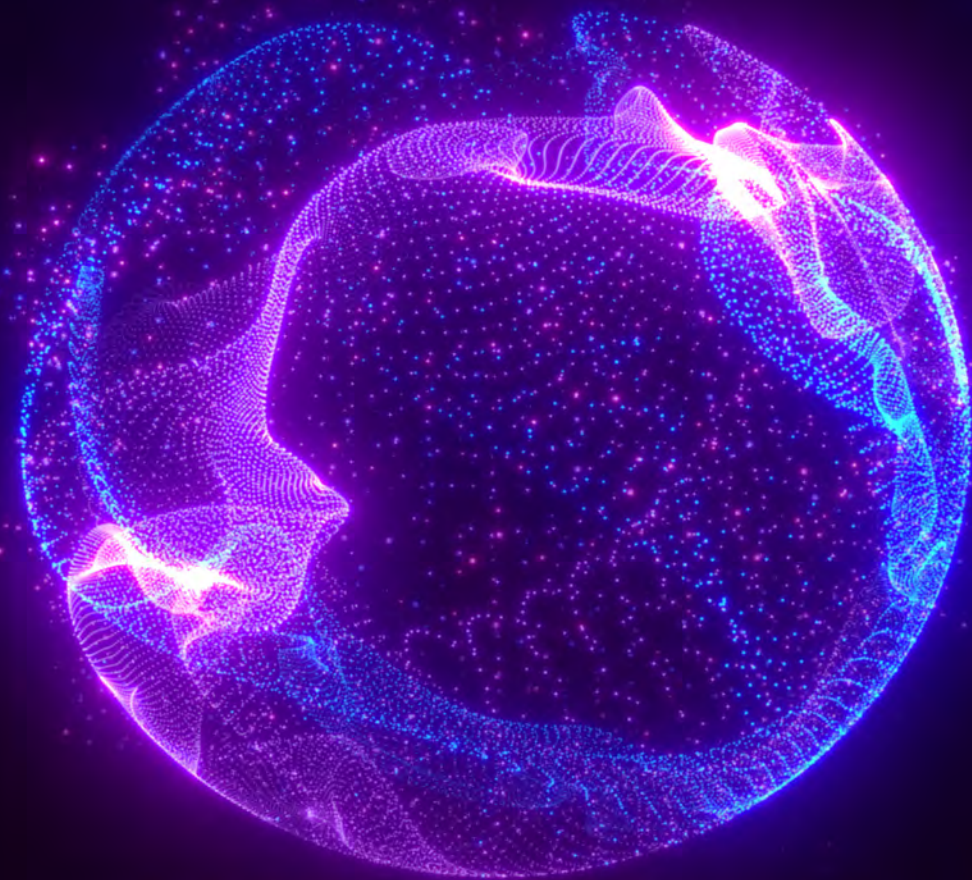
THE DEFINITIVE

AI Forum

FOR MEDIA, INFORMATION, AND EVENTS

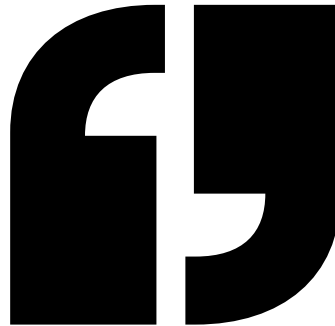
25 NOVEMBER 2025

STATIONERS' HALL, LONDON



FLASHES & FLAMES

THE GLOBAL MEDIA BUSINESS WEEKLY



“Flashes & Flames brings sophisticated narrative, analysis and flair to global trade media and has, therefore, become both an indispensable and enjoyable read.”

Justin Smith, CEO and co-founder, Semafor

“Flashes & Flames is the most inspiring media newsletter I ever read. It’s a must-read every week”

Arnaud de Puyfontaine, CEO-president, Vivendi SA

“I read Flashes & Flames because it’s always topical and enjoyable. Colin Morrison has excellent connections and great relationships with key people throughout the media.”

Geoff Dickinson, CEO, DMG Events

“I look forward to Flashes & Flames coming into my inbox each week because I always know I will emerge much better informed. .”

Mark Allen, Founder-chair, Mark Allen Group

“I love Flashes & Flames because it has extraordinary reach and truly gets under the skin of the media industry.”

Charlie Kerr, Founder, With Intelligence

“Flashes & Flames provides an in-depth look at the business of media simply not found anywhere else. It’s the first thing I read every Friday morning.”

Sean Griffey, founder, Industry Dive

“Flashes & Flames has quickly become essential reading on all things media. I enjoy the mix of reporting and opinions. Short, concise and full of information - there isn’t a week that I don’t learn something from reading it. “

Mark Shashoua, CEO, Hyve Group

“It is is one of the few industry reads that actually makes me feel smarter and better informed.”

Gabriel Brotman, EVP, Axel Springer

“Be it curiosity, FOMO or the need for essential intelligence, Flashes & Flames is the thing that I most look forward to on Friday morning. ”

Greg Hitchen, Group CEO, Terrapinn

“Flashes & Flames is essential weekly reading for anybody in the ever changing world of media”

Lara Boro, CEO, The Economist Group

“Every Friday, I make time for Flashes & Flames; it’s a valuable resource for anyone navigating the global media landscape. It’s not just informative - it’s essential reading.”

Hugh Jones, CEO, RX Global

The Definitive AI Forum is organised by [Flashes & Flames: Global Media Business Weekly](#)

Flashes & Flames is published every Friday at 7.30am London time.

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The Year in Media

Welcome!

As the title suggests, The Definitive AI Forum for Media, Information & Events is an event of at least as many questions as answers. That's the very nature of Artificial Intelligence.

For many of us, these are the early days of technologies that seem set to change the way that our content and services are produced, marketed and discovered. For others, of course, AI is already transforming relationships, performance and profits. It's also confronting content owners with the need to challenge, negotiate or accommodate the strategies of AI platforms and governments.

The objective of today's programme is to share our insights, strategies and forecasts - and to engage with leaders from across these industries. One of today's speakers has compared the current wave of AI rumour, news and activity to schooldays when there would always be someone who claimed not to have done any homework but, ultimately, came top of the class having secretly been working harder than anyone else.

Apart from all else, we want to share our insights on what is really happening - and can happen - in the burgeoning world of AI. We are here to share.

We want to cut through the claims and counter-claims, share the learnings and also the creative thoughts on what is

possible - and what might be coming next.

The emphasis is, of course, on how these exciting but challenging technologies can improve our performance, not on a narrow view of whether this or that system can cut costs. We are here to consider how best to develop our businesses now and in the future.

This is an event so very different from our Monetising B2B conference in May. But both share a learning-intensive programme of discussion and debate - not speeches - and our venue, the historic Stationers' Hall. Both events have been a sellout, and have deliberately been confined to 200 delegates.

This Forum embraces issues and ideas from across the diverse news, lifestyle, business information and events industries - because we all have so much to learn from each other. And we have so much learning to do.

I hope you will have a stimulating, informative and enjoyable day. Thanks for your support for this event, and for *Flashes & Flames* and *MediaVoices*. Welcome to the future.



Colin Morrison

Founder, Flashes & Flames Media Ltd, Publisher of Flashes & Flames and MediaVoices



Our historic venue

The setting for our conference is Stationers' Hall, the 17th century headquarters of the 622-year-old Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers. The so-called Stationers' Company is a "livery company" which, like many others, originate from the medieval trade guilds which were established in the historic heart of the City of London to regulate particular crafts.

The Stationers' Company's original members were text writers and illuminators of manuscript books, booksellers, bookbinders and suppliers of parchment, pens and paper. With the introduction of printing into England in 1476, printers began to join the guild, which received a Royal Charter of incorporation in 1557. This gave it powers to restrict printing and to search for seditious or heretical books. Members were, therefore, secured from outside competition. But they still had to settle disputes among themselves, such as who owned the text of a particular work to be printed.

All new, licenced titles were entered into the Stationers' Company Register. The Register

became the written record of all approved literature including, for example, the works of William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte.

The Stationers' Register became instrumental in the early development of Anglo-American copyright, was cited in Britain's first copyright legislation in 1710, and remained part of the copyright system until the end of compulsory registration in 1923. Welcome to what is, appropriately, one of the original homes of UK media.



Monetising B2B Media, Stationers' Hall, May 2025

Get session transcripts (and more) throughout the day



THE DEFINITIVE AI COLLECTION

This online hub contains all you need to stay up-to-date with the day. See the agenda, get session summaries and transcripts (available shortly after each session), notes and tools from the MediaVoices MasterClasses, this pre-conference eBook and more. Access it [here](#).

About us

Flashes & Flames was founded in 2012 as a blog by former media company CEO Colin Morrison. It became a weekly newsletter in 2016, publishing every Friday at 7.30am UK time. Next year, it celebrates its 10th anniversary.

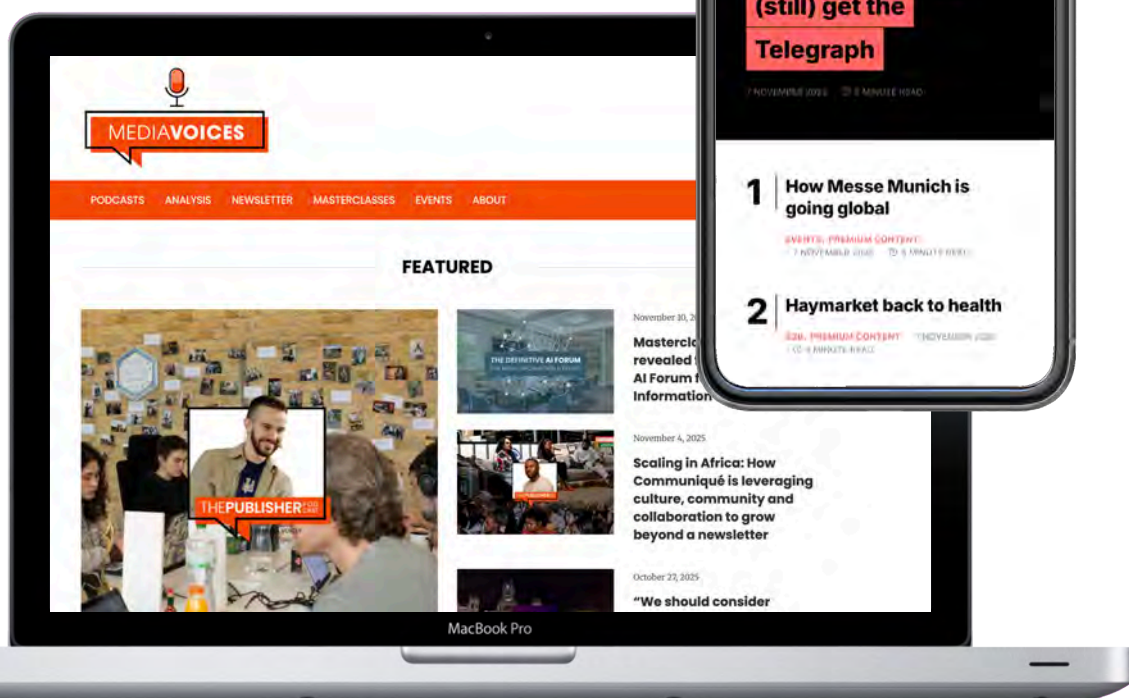
The analytical deepdive content has a regular readership of industry leaders in media, information and events, primarily in the UK, EU and US. Flashes & Flames Media Ltd has expanded substantially in 2025, with its first conference (Monetising B2B) in May and, now, the AI Forum. It also acquired the business of MediaVoices, the eight-year-old podcast, newsletter and events organiser whose co-founders Esther Kezia Thorpe and Peter Houston are now working with Colin Morrison to expand our portfolio of information and events.

THE DEFINITIVE AI FORUM

Organiser **Colin Morrison**
 Producer **Cobus Heyl**
 Sponsorship **John Schlaefli**
 Design and typography **Andy Cowles**

FLASHES & FLAMES / MEDIAVOICES

Publishing Director **Peter Houston**
 Editorial & Events Director **Esther Kezia Thorpe**
 Subscriptions **David Greene**



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Let's meet new people!

PRECISION NETWORKING STARTS HERE

Create your Conversation Starter profile [here](#) before the event. The earlier you start, the more meetings you can arrange. And the more likely you are to meet people who matter



The Definitive AI Forum brings together people who shape how AI is changing media, business information and events. Attendees are here to learn and to meet colleagues and peers who can make a difference to their thinking and business. Conversation Starter can help make it happen.

What It Does

Conversation Starter is a web-based networking platform that helps you plan one-to-one meetings before and during the event. No app downloads. No friction. Just smart matchmaking.

Before the event

Create your profile at events.conversationstarter.net/e/flashessflames-ai. Describe what you're looking for and what you can offer. Be specific. Browse other attendees. Send meeting invitations to people you want to talk to. When someone accepts, Conversation Starter automatically finds a time that works for both of you and assigns a meeting table (identified by numbers). Add programme sessions to your schedule. You'll get reminders before sessions start.

During the event

Check your schedule in the app. All confirmed

meetings show up with times and table numbers, along with the speaker sessions or MasterClasses you want to attend. The numbered meeting tables are in the networking areas. Go to the table with your number to meet your colleague and have the conversation.

One-to-one only

The AI-driven suggestions will point you towards relevant people. But you should also search manually. Look for specific expertise. Find people working on problems or issues similar to yours. When you send invitations, personalise them. Say why you want to meet. What you hope to discuss. Generic requests get ignored. Block time when you need breaks. You can manually block slots or simply not respond to invitations during those periods. Meetings are focused. No group sessions. This is about quality conversations, not networking theatre.

On the Day

Every confirmed meeting appears in your schedule with table numbers assigned automatically. Need to change a time? Click 'change time slot' on the meeting entry in your schedule. Both parties need to agree. You'll get SMS and calendar notifications when invitations are accepted. The platform updates in real time.

The Definitive AI Forum Agenda

This event is a sell out, so please use all available seats.
The six pre-booked MediaVoices Masterclass sessions will be held
on the third floor – please follow the signs for directions.
Full details of all Masterclasses are on page 14

8.00**Registration and breakfast**

8.45**Introduction**COLIN MORRISON, *founder, Flashes & Flames*

9.00**FIRESIDE CHAT****What AI means to Immediate Media**SEAN CORNWELL, *CEO, Immediate Media**Talking to COLIN MORRISON*

9.20**PANEL****AI and the future of trusted media.
How we safeguard trust and balance efficiency
with editorial integrity**PIERS NORTH, *CEO, Reach Plc*HENRY FAURE WALKER, *CEO, Newsquest*EMILY SHELLEY, *CEO, PA Media Group*JOANNA LEVESQUE, *Managing director, FT Strategies**Moderator: CHRIS DUNCAN, CEO, Seedelta*

Agenda

10.00

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to Hearst UK

TOBY WISEMAN, *managing director, Content, Hearst UK*
Talking to COLIN MORRISON

10.20

PANEL

How AI is already a vital part of B2B data and information. Who's doing what and how? How are the companies changing?

DEAN CURTIS, *CEO, Data Services LexisNexis (RELX)*
NICOLA TILLIN, *EVP Lions Intelligence*
CHRISTOPHER GASSON, *founder Global Water Intelligence*
JOHN BARNES, *Chief Digital Officer, William Reed*
Moderator: NATASHA CHRISTIE-MILLER, *Chair, Sifted EU*

11.00

Coffee

11.30

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to The Independent

CHRISTIAN BROUGHTON, *CEO, Independent News & Media*
Talking to COLIN MORRISON

11.50

PANEL

How AI is changing newsrooms and content

TOM JACKSON, *EVP/ CTO, News UK*
CAROLA YORK, *managing director (Europe), FT Specialist*
STUART FORREST, *Global Audience Director, Bauer*
Moderator: ESTHER KEZIA THORPE,
Editorial & Events Director, Flashes & Flames Media

12.30

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to the Daily Mail Group

DANNY GROOM, *CEO, DMG Media*
Talking to COLIN MORRISON

12.50

Lunch

MASTERCLASSES

10.00 – 11.00

How AI chatbots to increase engagement

With Zoe Coutinho,
Product Director at the FT

Using AI to enhance content

With Stacie Chan,
AI GTM & Partnerships

MASTERCLASSES

11.30 – 12.30

Frameworks to successfully implement AI in your business

With Madhav Chinnappa,
Advisor at Human Native AI

The ROI of AI

With James Carson, *Founder of AI content strategy consultancy Agentic*

Agenda

1.50

PANEL

**AI regulation, IP and copyright issues.
What can be achieved – and what can't?
What are the risks and compromises?**

AMIR MALIK, *managing director, Alvarez & Marsal*
SAJEEDA MERALI, *CEO, PPA*
TAMI HOFFMAN, *Director of Public Policy, The Guardian*
Moderator: PAUL HOOD, *Digital Media Consultant*

MASTERCLASSES

1.50 – 2.50

**Integrating AI into
journalism workflows**

*With Harriet Meyer,
founder of AI for Media*

**Optimising for
AI discovery**

*With David Buttle,
founder of DJB Strategies,*

2.30

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to the FT

JON SLADE, *CEO, Financial Times*
Talking to CHRIS DUNCAN

3.00

PANEL

Is AI a golden opportunity for events?

GREG HITCHEN, *CEO, Terrapinn*
ALISON JACKSON, *group MD, Nineteen*
ROBIN BOOTH, *managing director, Emap*
ROBIN TAPP, *CIO, RX*
Moderator: COLIN MORRISON

3.40

Coffee

4.10

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to Mumsnet

SUE MACMILLAN, *CEO, Mumsnet*
Talking to PETER HOUSTON, *co-founder MediaVoices*

4.30

FIRESIDE CHAT

What AI means to Informa

ALEX ROTH, *Strategy Director, Informa Plc*
Talking to NATASHA CHRISTIE-MILLER

4.50

PANEL

**Ask us anything – What have we learned? The
takeaways, the problems and the opportunities**

*With ALEX ROTH, JOANNA LEVESQUE, AMIR MALIK
and PETER HOUSTON. Moderator: COLIN MORRISON*

5.15

Pre-Christmas drinks party

Celebrate with us in Stationers' Hall!

Speakers



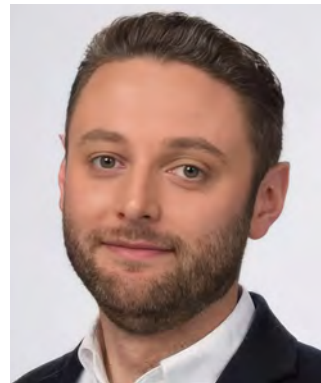
John Barnes

CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER,
WILLIAM REED



Robin Booth

MANAGING DIRECTOR, EMAP



Christian Broughton

CEO, INDEPENDENT NEWS &
MEDIA



Natasha Christie-Miller

CHAIR, SIFTED EU



Sean Cornwell

CEO, IMMEDIATE MEDIA



Dean Curtis

CEO, LEXISNEXIS
DATA SERVICES



Chris Duncan

CHRIS DUNCAN, CEO, SEEDelta



Henry Faure Walker

CEO, NEWSQUEST



Stuart Forrest

GLOBAL AUDIENCE DIRECTOR,
BAUER MEDIA GROUP



Christopher Gasson

FOUNDER, GLOBAL WATER
INTELLIGENCE



Danny Groom

CEO, DMG MEDIA



Greg Hitchen

CEO, TERRAPINN

Speakers



Tami Hoffman

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY,
THE GUARDIAN



Paul Hood

DIGITAL MEDIA CONSULTANT



Peter Houston

CO-FOUNDER MEDIAVOICES



Alison Jackson

GROUP MD, NINETEEN



Tom Jackson

EVP/ CTO, NEWS UK



Esther Kezia Thorpe

EDITORIAL & EVENTS DIRECTOR,
FLASHES & FLAMES MEDIA



Joanna Levesque

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
FT STRATEGIES



Sue Macmillan

SUE MACMILLAN, CEO,
MUMSNET



Amir Malik

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ALVAREZ & MARSAL



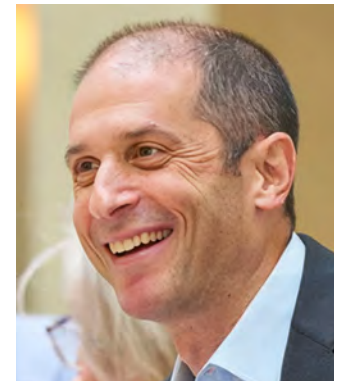
Sajeeda Merali

CEO, PPA



Piers North

CEO, REACH PLC



Alex Roth

STRATEGY DIRECTOR,
INFORMA PLC

Speakers



Emily Shelley

CEO, PA MEDIA GROUP



Jon Slade

CEO, FINANCIAL TIMES



Robin Tapp

CIO, RX GLOBAL



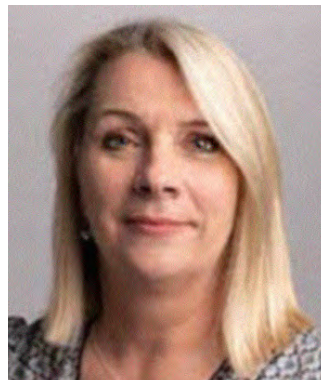
Nicola Tillin

EVP LIONS INTELLIGENCE



Toby Wiseman

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
CONTENT, HEARST UK



Carola York

MANAGING DIRECTOR
(EUROPE), FT SPECIALIST

COMPANIES ON STAGE

Bauer Media

€2bn revenue family-owned, Europe's largest magazine and audio group

DMG Media

Publisher of Daily Mail, Metro and I paper. Part of £1.2bn DMGT

Emap

Part of UK privately-owned Metropolis, £50mn-revenue B2B and specialist media

Financial Times

£550mn revenue financial information and events group. Part of Nikkei Inc

Global Water Int

Privately-owned B2B information provider on global water resources

Guardian

UK-based but increasingly global, charity-owned news brand. £275mn revenue

Hearst UK

UK magazine subsidiary of \$12bn-revenue Hearst Corp. £110mn revenue

Immediate Media

Burda-owned, UK-based £200mn-revenue magazine-media group

Independent News

Digital, international (and consistently profitable) news site. £60mn revenue

Informa

World's largest trade show group and also academic publisher. £4bn revenue

LexisNexis

Part of the £3bn Risk division of £10bn-revenue RELX Plc

Lions Intelligence

Data arm including WARC of £100mn-revenue Cannes Lions. Part of Informa Plc

Mumsnet

UK's 25-year-old leading parenting site. £10mn revenue

News UK

UK news publisher and broadcaster. £400mn revenue. Part of News Corp

Newsquest

UK's second largest regional news group. £200mn revenue. Part of \$2.5bn-revenue USA Today Co.(ex Gannett)

Nineteen Group

Private equity-owned, UK-based trade show operator. £65mn revenue

PA Media Group

£120mn-revenue UK-based news, content and photo agency

PPA

Professional Publishers Association of UK magazine-media and B2B publishers*

Reach Plc

UK's largest publisher of national and regional news brands. £530mn revenue

RX Global

World's second largest trade show organiser. £1.2bn revenue. Part of RELX

Terrapinn Events

UK-Australia global events organiser with \$160mn-revenue (4x in four years)

William Reed

163-year-old UK-based, £80mn-revenue food & drink information and events B2B

Original Reporting

All the company links refer to subscriber-only Flashes & Flames stories

*PPA link goes to ppa.co.uk

Masterclasses

Organised by

MEDIAVOICES

These one hour sessions are open to attendees for booking now at no additional cost. If there are spaces on the day, you may of course attend. But each MediaVoices Masterclass has a capacity of just 20 people so, if it books up in advance, we can't accept any walk-ins.

10.00 – 11.00

How AI chatbots can be used to increase engagement

With **ZOE COUTINHO**, Product Director at the Financial Times

Publishers are exploring the use of AI tools to keep users on-site and surface vast archives of relevant, trusted content. Zoe Coutinho leads a team experimenting with AI chatbots on FT Professional. In this workshop, Zoe will outline the process they went through to implement the chatbot, and where they're looking to next for AI-powered engagement.

You will learn

- How to evaluate where AI products are (and aren't) appropriate for building engagement on-site
- How to measure success and ROI for chatbots, and what signals to look out for
- Whether a build or buy approach is right for you



Zoe has over 15 years of experience building great products, strong teams, and clear direction for companies including Cleo, Pollen, Reed and Wonga.

Using AI to enhance content

With **STACIE CHAN**, who has 20 years of experience growing (and exiting) businesses at the intersection of technology and media

AI can do more than just generate text. For savvy journalists, there are tools available to transform content into multimodal formats which can engage audiences on multiple levels and platforms. Stacie Chan will take attendees through various tools to enhance journalistic reporting.

You will learn

- How to identify opportunities to enhance content with AI
- Some of the most common AI tools and what they do
- Hands-on demo of transforming your content for different mediums



Most recently, Stacie was the Founding Commercial Lead at Haiper.ai, a genAI startup developing video & image models. Stacie spent nine years at Google, and as a journalist, spent many years at CBS, AOL, and local papers. In a former lifetime, she was an Emmy-nominated actress.

Masterclasses

11.30 - 12.30

Frameworks to successfully implement AI in your business

With **MADHAV CHINNAPPA**, a senior executive consultant who has worked at the intersection of news, AI, technology and sustainability globally for more than two decades

Whether you've already got an AI strategy for your business or know you need one, clear leadership is needed from the top to ensure it is implemented safely and successfully. In this workshop, Madhav Chinnappa takes you through a framework for senior leaders and executive teams to introduce AI tools and workflows in their organisations.

You will learn

- How to empower senior leaders to experiment with AI in a way that benefits the business
- Pitfalls to be aware of when introducing AI tools
- The benefits of having AI champions at a senior level
- How to re-invest time for higher-value work



Madhav is currently advising Human Native AI, an AI data licensing marketplace as well as leading an AI thought leadership event series for the Thomson Foundation and has recently joined the

future insights board of Mediahuis. Prior to that he was Director of News Ecosystem Development at Google. He has worked in the news industry since 1994 – first in the launch team of Associated Press Television (APTV), a year in M&A at United News & Media and spent over 9 years at BBC News.

The ROI of AI

With **JAMES CARSON**, Founder of AgentiC, a consultancy that works with media owners and content focused companies on AI strategy and workflows to enhance audience trends and publishing processes.

There's a great deal of pressure on companies to introduce AI, but how do you go about assessing its impact and potential for return on investment? James Carson will take you through a framework for measuring ROI in a media business.

You will learn

- How to evaluate AI projects before, during and after inception
- What signals success beyond financial savings
- Managing rollout of AI projects in a way which sets them up for success



Before founding AgentiC, James was managing director of History Hit, a multi award winning content network that broadcast across subscription video on demand, YouTube and podcasts.

He has also held audience leadership roles at The Telegraph and Bauer Media.

THIS SESSION IS SPONSORED BY

bridged

An AI company helping media & event businesses turn their audience data & digital touchpoints into measurable growth

Masterclasses

1.50 – 2.50

Integrating AI into journalism workflows

With **HARRIET MEYER**, an award-winning journalist and founder of AI for Media, helping media professionals thrive in the age of AI, without losing their minds or their humanity

There are numerous ways journalists and editors can use AI in their workflows to help research, brainstorm ideas, interrogate data and more. Harriet Meyer will help attendees identify areas of their workflow where AI could help, as well as potential pitfalls to avoid and some ethical considerations.

You will learn

- How AI can slot into journalistic workflows from brief to publication, and where human judgment is irreplaceable.
- A run-through of the most useful AI tools for journalists right now.
- What to be aware of when it comes to using AI, and how to communicate appropriate usage with teams.



For over two decades, Harriet has written about finance and consumer issues for UK national news brands including The Sunday Times, The Times, The Guardian, and The Observer.

Today, Harriet trains media professionals in how to streamline and strengthen workflows with AI. Her focus is on practical, actionable applications that enhance productivity without compromising professional or editorial standards.

Optimising for AI discovery

With **DAVID BUTTLE**, the founder of DJB Strategies. The co-leader is **STUART FORREST**, Global Audience Development Director, Bauer Media Group

The way audiences find new content is undergoing dramatic changes with the rise of AI-powered search. Adapting to these new habits will be crucial for surviving and thriving over the next few years. David Buttle will help attendees formulate a strategy for weathering rapid changes, and future-proofing your content discovery strategy.

You will learn

- How the search and discovery landscape is shifting
- Assessing the benefits and costs of remaining visible in AI-powered search
- Optimisation paths to create resilient businesses



Prior to founding DJB Strategies, David was Director of Public Affairs and Platform Strategy for the Financial Times. He led the FT's response to artificial intelligence, had strategic oversight of its interfaces with Big Tech, and was responsible for relationships with governments and legislators.

THIS SESSION IS SPONSORED BY



Content & audience management tools for media, sport, and publishers, allowing them to prioritise revenue generation & audience growth

Conference Briefing

Three AI-immersed consultants provide context for The Definitive AI Forum for Media, Information, and Events

PAUL HOOD

Digital Media Consultant

JOANNA LEVESQUE

Managing director, FT Strategies

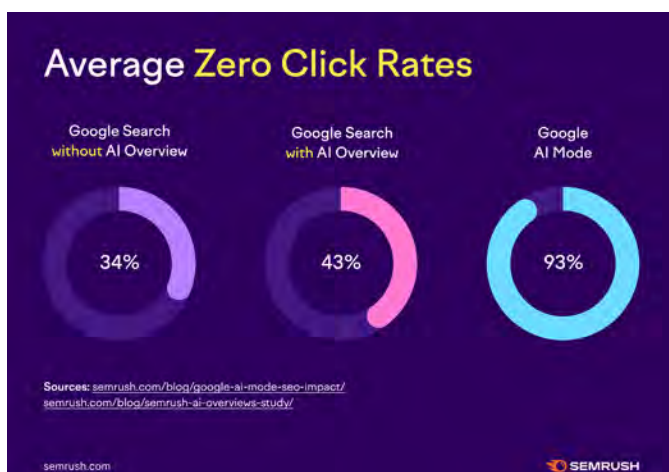
AMIR MALIK

Managing director, Alvarez & Marsal

How to become a master of AI reinvention

By **PAUL HOOD**

Let's be honest; for many publishers 2025 has been tough. The early impact of AI has largely been as a ruthless disruptor, with LLM's hoovering up vast swathes of copyrighted content and serving it neatly via increasingly helpful chatbots to 'our' prospective readers for free. Anecdotally many publishers have reported a big drop in traffic this year, and now we have the data to back it up. This chart from [SEM Rush](#) quantifies the existential threat to publisher business models and reinforces the need for traffic diversification and deeper engagement. It shows that emergence of AI search (Zero-Click and AI Overviews) has reduced click-through by up to 59%. This is not theoretical: it's a present-day revenue risk.



AI search has reduced click-through by over half

Will 2026 be as brutal and as disruptive for publishers as we've witnessed in 2025 so far? Or will premium publishers find ways to harness AI tools as an engine for value creation?

I still feel confident that for publishers that act quickly, experimentally, strategically and with big ambition, we'll see some big winners in the year ahead. In this piece we'll look at some of the successes that legacy publishers are already seeing, we'll cover some practical tips that publishers can employ to drive growth and we'll highlight some of the pitfalls to avoid. Let's start with an inspirational story about revenue diversification.

Revenue diversification

The Nvidia story

What does Nvidia - now a \$4 trillion juggernaut - have in common with a 150-year-old publisher? Perhaps more than you might think.

Fifteen years ago, Nvidia was "just a gaming company" making graphics cards for PC hobbyists. When crypto mining boomed, the company pivoted, capturing both planned and accidental revenue from GPUs perfect for blockchain's parallel computation demands. Most would have been satisfied; Jensen Huang and team weren't.

In 2006 Nvidia quietly launched CUDA, a programming platform for general-purpose computation on GPUs. It was ignored by most - until a handful of AI researchers realised that CUDA could train neural networks 10-100x faster than CPUs. By 2012, with the seminal "AlexNet" breakthrough, Nvidia was perfectly positioned for the AI explosion.

From 2020 to 2024, Nvidia's revenue mix flipped: what was once 51% gaming is now 88% AI data centre, and cumulative revenue topped \$46 billion in one quarter alone. Its \$1 trillion market cap doubled, re-doubled and then doubled again - faster than any company in modern history.

Why does this matter for publishers? Because the real Nvidia lesson is that category-dominating businesses aren't the ones who resent change, fight the last war, or delay hard decisions. It's those who anticipate disruption and repeatedly, fearlessly, reinvent their role as the environment shifts. Today's publishers, media companies and event organisers are standing where Nvidia stood fifteen years ago: at the edge of enormous, unpredictable opportunity. The choice is clear - embrace the pivot and exploit new data and AI waves, or watch as market value migrates elsewhere.

The shape of disruption

AI's effect on Media sectors

1

NEWSPAPERS

Fighting for survival, racing for reinvention

Newspapers, long plagued by shrinking revenues and the gravitational pull of platforms, face a paradox: AI is both lifesaver and existential risk.

The FT, led by Jon Slade (one of the Forum's speakers), exemplifies what transformation can look like. Armed with a team of data scientists and a willingness to break traditions, the FT now leverages machine learning across its subscription funnel: surfacing tailored article recommendations, optimizing paywall timing and even guiding dynamic pricing models based on churn predictions. The outcome? Subscriber

growth breaking past the 15% mark in key verticals, and churn losses falling to record lows.

Reach plc deploys generative AI to local news, using natural language models to summarise council meeting transcripts, automate video captioning and unearth hyper-local trends for journalists to investigate. Reach have reported that the newsroom's AI pilot led to a 22% productivity uplift, freeing editorial teams to chase bigger stories and boosting pageviews by over 30% on AI-enhanced content.

But challenges abound: as mentioned at the top of this piece, many publishers have seen digital traffic dip this year after Google and OpenAI began publishing AI news snippets, highlighting the risk that generative models could disintermediate trusted brands. Some publishers have seen up to a 40% drop in referral traffic from search, sparking fresh urgency for new AI-driven product innovation.

2

LIFESTYLE MAGAZINES AND DIGITAL VERTICALS

Adapt or fade

If the newspaper business lives on renewal, lifestyle and vertical magazines are fighting for relevance as digital audiences fragment and platforms squeeze margins.

Hearst UK (Katie Vanneck-Smith, panel speaker) is ahead of the curve with its "Ask Good Housekeeping" engine. Built on a custom-trained LLM and Hearst's own usage data, it delivers AI-generated, brand-safe advice tailored to reader intent - fuelling record web engagement and opening up new affiliate revenue streams. Pilot results show 18% higher click-through than legacy service content. Cosmopolitan's move into AI-powered social listening has boosted time-on-site by 23%.

Bauer's algorithmic content segmentation has allowed for micro-niche newsletter products tailored to reader mood and time of day, doubling open rates among key demographics while algorithmic "taste-makers" curate content that would have otherwise been lost in the archive.

But the risks still loom large: Legacy publishers who attempt to bolt "AI newsrooms" onto brittle legacy workflows will likely only to see traffic and ad yield fall as quality and trust suffer. When algorithms fail to reflect a brand's editorial voice or ethics, the reputational damage can be swift and severe.

3

B2B INFORMATION GIANTS

Quietly dominating

While B2C media has grabbed most of the headlines, it's B2B information services that may emerge as AI's biggest winners in the year ahead.

RELX has gone all-in on AI-powered analytics products, using proprietary datasets aggregated over decades to offer insights in law, science and risk. These platforms now account for a significant percentage of operating profit and churn has been slashed as client dependency deepens. Investors consistently reward RELX with "tech stock" multiples, despite its roots in old-world publishing.

Informa's integration of AI into event planning, exhibitor targeting and lead qualification has made it the backbone for marketing automation in the industries it serves. Data-driven customer journeys, shaped by AI, now underpin every major decision from event formats to sponsorship models. High-margin consultancy, advisory and analytics products - not just content or ticket sales - are driving revenue growth.

The Lesson? B2B players with unique IP who bet early on AI-powered productisation are changing the competitive field, while those treating AI as a cost-trimming afterthought find themselves trapped by commoditised offerings, with margins continuing to decline.

4

B2B EVENTS

From networking fairs to data-driven marketplaces

Live events and exhibitions - once networking playgrounds - are being recast as data marketplaces, powered by predictive intelligence.

Terrapinn and Easyfairs use AI to build granular attendee personas, enabling sponsors to target high-intent buyers, while driving up cross-sell and upsell conversion rates. Predictive matchmaking engines, fueled by hybrid (virtual/in-person) event data, make each event "smarter" than the last, rewarding delegates with stronger ROI for time and spend.

AI's impact isn't just about tech: It's also cultural. Greg Hitchen and Anne Lafère argue that event organisers who embrace data-driven workflows and open innovation are outpacing their more traditional rivals. They've seen Net Promoter Scores and retention improving 20-40% for events piloting AI across agenda-building, content creation and customer service.

But of course there are risks to be aware of. Over-automation can strip events of their human edge. AI should complement rather than replace the live event spark. The best results mix algorithmic prediction with human insight, using AI as a co-pilot for curators and hosts.

Ways to win with AI

B2B, B2C and the playbook for both

What should publishers actually do as AI remakes the landscape?



OWN (AND ENRICH) PROPRIETARY DATA

Perhaps the single best predictor of future advantage is exclusive access to unique, first-party data. RELX and Informa's platforms dominate because their data assets can't be easily replicated by outside AI tools.

For publishers, rising consent barriers and looming privacy regulation mean that gathering and enriching first-party user data - ethically and transparently - isn't just compliance, it's competitive hygiene.



BUILD TRUST THROUGH TRANSPARENCY

The age of "black box" algorithms is over for reputable media. FT Strategies and Hearst both emphasise making AI explainable - to editors, readers and regulators. The BBC's latest AI pilots let users see how recommendations were generated and why they're seeing what they're seeing.

Smart publishers will document editorial involvement and audit trails on AI-assisted stories, building user trust and regulatory goodwill. Global news trust studies show that "explainable AI" can improve engagement and retention scores by 10-15%.



DELIVER REAL PERSONALISATION (NOT JUST MORE CONTENT)

Amazon and Netflix-like personalisation is the norm. Publishers must catch up; many already have. The FT, Hearst UK and Bauer segment audiences down to reading frequency, topic clusters and preferred formats - and use AI to test new content types (audio, video, interactive tools) on micro-cohorts before rolling out more widely.

Immediate Media and major European publishers are moving beyond "content at scale" to "value at scale," including AI-driven curation of newsletters, bundles, and niche virtual events.



QUICK WINS, ITERATIVE LEARNING AND SCALING UP

The FT, Terrapinn and Easyfairs have all adopted a "perpetual pilot" mentality. Early quick wins, like AI-based video captioning or events matchmaking, build internal momentum and supply fresh data for the next innovation.

Practical advice: Champions should work cross-functionally, harvest learnings quickly and look to scale pilots into enterprise-level platforms within months, not years.



ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS - SET THE RULES BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE DOES

With regulation advancing in the UK, EU and US, and copyright questions looming (a key topic at

the Forum’s regulatory sessions), smart companies are investing in copyright and ethics policies.

A practical approach: form AI steering committees, audit current use cases, and actively engage with policymakers to ensure self-regulation outpaces imposed regulation whenever possible.

Cautionary tales

Who’s Losing, and why?

CASE 1

Newsrooms that outsourced core capabilities

Some major global publishers ramped up the deployment of “off-the-shelf” AI tools for content curation and workflow automation thinking it would unlock immediate efficiency. Instead, they lost editorial edge - readers found the blend of AI and human insight unconvincing, and click engagement dropped by double digits. The lesson: Use AI as a co-pilot, not as a substitute pilot.

CASE 2

Weak data, weak defences

Media companies with limited or unstructured data often find themselves late to the AI party. Sadly we’ve seen some smaller publishers, unable to invest in proprietary pipelines, swiftly outpaced by more data-mature competitors. A robust DMP and active data governance are as crucial as the AI application itself.

CASE 3

Ethical lapses and brand erosion

Quick-and-dirty implementation of AI-generated content without clear labeling or oversight has led to regulatory censure in Europe and a backlash

from core audiences. Those transparent about process - and about AI’s limits - emerge with higher trust, while others face lasting brand erosion.

Practical checklist

Actions for Media and Event leaders

Immediate next steps:

- 1 Audit current AI usage and data assets: Are workflows, content, or audience segments automated already? Where could proprietary value be added?
- 2 Build a cross-functional AI team: Editorial, product, tech, data and legal specialists working on rapid pilots - think “sandbox” before “factory.”
- 3 Create an AI ethics and transparency framework: Publish it, update it, own it.
- 4 Activate three “quick wins” in AI: Content enrichment, automated marketing workflows, and reader/delegate personalisation.
- 5 Join consortia or engage with policymakers: Don’t go it alone - regulation will arrive; best fight its corner with peers.

Longer term:

- Grow exclusive data: Invest in unique IP, proprietary datasets, and segmentation that can’t be easily replicated.
- Foster ongoing experimentation: The pace of AI innovation will only accelerate. Build a culture of test, fail, learn and scale.
- Keep AI visible, never opaque: Both to teams and to audiences.
- Prize AI fluency - not just among technologists, but editorial and commercial leaders.
- Link AI adoption to value creation, not just cost-cutting.

In sum: The next five years will be the most inventive, unpredictable and potentially rewarding for those in media and events willing to move at pace.

The media world's future belongs to doers, not watchers; to brands that see AI not as a threat, but as the latest and most powerful tool for radical reinvention.

The winners in the AI era won't necessarily be the most established, but the most agile - the ones who see challenge as signal, not noise. Like Nvidia, media leaders can use today's turbulence as tomorrow's springboard. The future is here. Let's not just survive it - let's master the reinvention.

Essential Reading

Three good links

- [AI and the Future of News 2025](#)
(Reuters Institute)

In-depth case studies and stats on how newsrooms are actually using AI in 2025.

- [Generative AI and News: Public Attitudes](#)
(Reuters Institute)

Essential research on what readers expect from AI-powered journalism and perceptions of trust.

- [Pew research articles on Artificial Intelligence](#)

A panoramic look across sectors at AI's changing role in content and audience strategy.

How AI is a golden opportunity for B2B media

By **JOANNA LEVESQUE**

Artificial intelligence is often discussed in extremes: either as an existential threat to creative industries or a miracle productivity tool that will replace half the workforce. In reality, for media, information and events companies, AI is neither. It is a profound shift in how value is created, distributed and captured – a golden opportunity to realise near-term efficiency and reach while laying the foundations for business models that can evolve and sustain growth in a new discovery landscape.

Over the past decade, publishers and information providers have spent much of their time playing catch-up with platform dynamics. The rise of search and social media gave unprecedented reach but gradually eroded control. Today's AI revolution brings both a reckoning and a reset. While generative systems are changing how people find and consume information, they also open new routes to differentiation, efficiency and growth.

AI is already proving its worth inside organisations. The greater opportunity lies in how it reshapes business models – from ownership of discovery to the creation of entirely new forms of value.

Where AI Is Really Adding Value

The most meaningful impact of AI in publishing today is not about replacing journalists or analysts

with machines. It lies in extending human capability to improve clarity, depth and speed.

Expanding reach through language and localisation

Translation tools have evolved far beyond literal conversion. Modern AI systems can adapt tone, context and even cultural references. For publishers and events businesses, this means the ability to localise stories, reports or session summaries for specific regions or professional communities without proportionally increasing staff. A single piece of journalism or event content can now travel across markets with minimal friction, opening new audiences and revenue potential. The opportunity for many publications to access a diaspora audience is one example of how we are seeing publishers leverage this, and this is being grasped by south asian publishers already.

Deepening insight and analysis

AI also accelerates investigative and analytical work. Publishers are using machine learning to extract insights from complex datasets – satellite imagery, blockchain transactions, environmental data – where manual analysis would be prohibitively slow. The human layer remains essential: judgment, editorial sense and ethical framing. But the time saved on collection and

structuring allows teams to focus on interpretation and storytelling. Recently the FT ran a series of stories on MPs' interests based on the publicly available material in the Register of Members' interests. Bringing the diverse formats within the register together was possible faster and more accurately than previously releasing time to bring the stories together.

For information and research providers, similar methods are turning raw data into decision-ready intelligence. Structured extraction, summarisation and anomaly detection can reveal commercial or policy patterns far faster than traditional methods.

Innovating in format and storytelling

AI is also unlocking new forms of storytelling and audience engagement. Voice synthesis and dynamic visualisation enable journalists or analysts to produce explainers and interactive summaries that match changing consumption habits. Conversational interfaces – where audiences ask questions and receive verified, contextual answers – are beginning to bridge the gap between news, knowledge and utility. For the Financial Times, Ask FT has been delivering quality summaries of information from our archives for many months now and is a clear tool for engaging readers.

For event organisers, generative AI can extend the life of a conference or panel by transforming recorded sessions into searchable transcripts, highlight reels or thematic summaries. The line between live experience and knowledge product is starting to blur.

Unlocking internal efficiency

The less glamorous side of AI is often the

most valuable. Automation of routine tasks – from meeting summarisation to knowledge retrieval – saves hours of unproductive work. In organisations where time is the scarcest resource, these small gains accumulate into cultural change. Teams become faster, better informed and more confident using AI in their day-to-day work. One colleague described to me that they measured AI Return on Investment as “painful hours saved”. Surely we all have tasks that we'd like to have automated.

This combination of audience reach, analytical depth and operational efficiency explains why AI is already improving margins and morale in leading media companies. But the story does not end there. These short-term efficiencies are also building the foundations for a more profound shift in how discovery, trust and value will operate in the decade ahead.

The Strategic Inflection Point

Discovery in the Age of AI

AI is already proving its worth inside organisations. The greater opportunity lies in how it reshapes business models – from ownership of discovery to the creation of entirely new forms of value.

If the first wave of digital transformation was about distribution, the next is about discovery. For two decades, the web's discovery layer – search engines and social platforms – defined how audiences found content. Publishers produced; algorithms delivered. That model is now breaking.

AI-generated “answers” in search engines are reducing click-through traffic across the industry. Consumers are increasingly satisfied with summaries or conversational responses. Fewer users reach the original sources; more stay within AI interfaces. Similar dynamics are emerging in

research, education and event discovery, where generative tools surface insights without crediting or compensating the original provider.

From the user's perspective, this represents convenience. From the publisher's, it is a structural shock. Discovery no longer guarantees engagement, and reach no longer guarantees revenue. The behaviour of audiences – and algorithms – is fragmenting across a widening set of touchpoints: AI chatbots, messaging apps, short-form video, and emerging multimodal platforms.

This fragmentation forces companies to decide how and where they wish to be discovered. The question is no longer simply how to grow traffic, but what kind of audience relationships are worth owning. FT Strategies frames this as a two-axis choice:

1 Distribution – whether a company retains direct access to audiences or relies on intermediaries.

2 Audience need – whether it primarily serves utility (information) or identity (entertainment and community).

The resulting four archetypes – Niche Specialist, Intelligence Provider, Voice-led Brand and Mass-Reach Publisher – each imply different capabilities and risks. A subscription-based business might thrive through direct relationships and habit-forming products. A data-driven information provider could license structured feeds into AI ecosystems. Voice-led franchises rely on personality and community. Mass-reach players chase scale across platform environments.

The critical point is that AI discovery collapses the old hierarchy. No single model dominates. The winners will be those who diversify intelligently across these positions, balancing owned control with selective embedding in third-party ecosystems.

From Efficiency to Advantage

Turning Today's AI Value into Tomorrow's Opportunity

Operational gains from AI – the faster workflows, the improved reach – are only the beginning. They are stepping stones towards more defensible, higher-value business models.

Building the foundations

Capabilities such as prompt fluency, data literacy and safe experimentation are not peripheral; they are prerequisites. Organisations that treat early AI pilots as learning investments, rather than isolated projects, accumulate reusable assets: clean data, shared tools and experienced teams. These become the platform for strategic differentiation later.

Owning trust and distinctiveness

For those operating in the Niche Specialist quadrant, the opportunity lies in doubling down on depth and habit. As AI systems summarise surface-level information, human expertise and reliability grow in value. Trusted brands that provide verification, context and consistent tone will retain audiences seeking assurance rather than novelty.

Meanwhile, Voice-led Brands can lean into personality. In a world of synthetic sameness, human perspective is the premium product. Podcasts, newsletters and community-driven formats can turn affinity into membership or sponsorship revenue.

Becoming the infrastructure

For Intelligence Providers, the real breakthrough is becoming part of the information infrastructure that underpins AI ecosystems. Structured, high-quality data – enriched with metadata and provenance – can be licensed to aggregators, research tools or generative models under transparent agreements. As retrieval-based licensing evolves, publishers and event businesses that can measure and monetise where their content surfaces will gain recurring, scalable income.

Events companies, for example, could transform session transcripts and delegate interactions into structured knowledge feeds for professional databases. This turns ephemeral experiences into enduring data assets.

Balancing reach with resilience

Mass-reach players – or anyone dependent on advertising and platform distribution – face the greatest volatility. Yet even here, AI offers options: better content tagging, smarter contextual ad placement, and improved prediction of what drives attention. The long-term challenge is converting transient visibility into repeat engagement within owned channels, where brands control the experience and the data.

Learning a unified lesson

Across all quadrants, the strategic logic is the same: use today's efficiency gains to invest in tomorrow's defensible advantage. AI shortens

cycles, but it also raises the bar for differentiation. The organisations that win will be those that convert automation into time – time to understand their audiences better, experiment more, and design business models aligned with new patterns of discovery.

Leadership and Culture

What Readiness Looks Like

The technical barriers to AI adoption are falling; the cultural ones remain. Many media organisations recognise the potential of AI yet struggle to allocate time and focus for meaningful experimentation.

Leadership therefore matters more than technology. Executives must set a clear vision of why AI matters, define measurable goals, and empower teams to test and learn. Early pilots will fail – sometimes because the technology is immature, sometimes because the real problem lies elsewhere. What distinguishes successful adopters is their ability to extract insight from those missteps and redeploy lessons at scale.

Investment in foundational skills is equally critical. The Financial Times' own success with tools such as Ask FT, which combines large language models with earlier vectorisation techniques, reflects years of quiet work on data governance and shared infrastructure. These enablers made subsequent innovation cheaper, safer and faster.

For smaller organisations or event businesses, readiness means identifying reusable processes – from content tagging to metadata standards – that can support future AI use. Culture, capability and clarity of purpose are the real competitive moats.

A Call To Reimagine Value

AI is not a passing trend or a marginal tool. It is an accelerant that exposes where value truly resides. For media, information and events companies, that value lies not in volume or virality, but in trust, context and the ability to turn knowledge into action.

The industry is entering a decisive phase. Companies that treat AI merely as automation will see diminishing returns. Those that integrate it into their strategic fabric – aligning experimentation with clear business objectives – will capture the upside.

This requires executives to make deliberate choices about where to play: to own their distribution or embed within ecosystems; to focus on depth or breadth; to invest in infrastructure or identity. Each path carries risk, but inaction carries more.

AI can, and should, be the catalyst for rebuilding control, trust and value across the information economy. The real golden opportunity is not in using AI faster, but in using it smarter – to redefine what makes your organisation essential in an AI-shaped world.

[FT Strategies report : The Future of Discovery, Strategic business model choices for Publishers.](#)
November 2025

What I have learned (so far) about AI and us

By **AMIR MALIK**

Artificial intelligence has become the most important and the least understood force in modern media. For all the noise surrounding it, few leaders have paused long enough to grasp what this technology is actually doing to our information ecology. The changes are not cosmetic. They are foundational, affecting how truth is sought, how trust is built, and how value is created.

The early phase of digital transformation reshaped media through speed and reach. AI, however, changes the very grammar of communication. It alters the relationship between creator and consumer, between brand and audience, between discovery and authority. The old structures that held the industry together - distribution, search, advertising, editorial - are being rewritten in code.

The challenge of meaning in an automated world

AI excels at prediction and synthesis. What it's yet to understand is meaning. In media, where meaning has always been the product, this distinction is integral. Generative models can summarise, translate, and mimic tone, but they do not yet weigh consequence. They produce probability, not perspective.

In journalism, this creates a tension between efficiency and editorial integrity. AI can produce clean copy faster than any reporter, but it cannot ask why a story matters or what truth it

serves. The temptation to automate content is strong, especially in a commercial environment that rewards volume and speed. Yet if every outlet produces the same algorithmic output, differentiation collapses and trust evaporates.

Another example that has been making headlines of late is the launch of Elon Musk's Grokipidea. Musk has dismissed Wikipedia as an "extension of legacy media propaganda", positioning his alternative as a circuit-breaker. However, the logic seems strained - to remove the human from the truth-finding process risks not only eroding trust in the source but reinforcing the very problem it claims to solve - the recycling of a single, unchallenged perspective.

The very qualities that give media its authority - human judgement, curiosity and empathy - now risk becoming optional extras.

The distortion of discovery

The more profound disruption, however, may lie in discovery. Google's new AI-powered search experience is not a neutral innovation. It represents a reordering of how knowledge reaches the public. Instead of directing readers to publishers, Google's generative summaries increasingly become the destination. The platform that once served as a gateway to content is now an intermediary that consumes it.

This is an existential problem for media companies. When search becomes synthetic, the economic model built on visibility collapses. Traffic declines, advertising weakens, and brand equity erodes in the quiet shift from cited source to invisible input. Publishers are watching their own words reappear as paraphrased text inside an AI interface that no longer requires a click.

For business information providers, the implications are equally stark. Data that was once proprietary now risks becoming training material. The moat that once protected value, exclusive insight, domain expertise, and structured information is being tested by systems that learn from it without attribution. The challenge is no longer data ownership alone, but data provenance and ethical use.

The false comfort of scale

AI invites scale, and scale often invites mediocrity. Media groups that invest in automation tend to mistake output for impact. The allure of increased productivity conceals a deeper question: what kind of value are we scaling? The best media organisations have always been selective, not expansive. They have cultivated scarcity of perspective, of trust, of meaning.

The platforms that now dominate distribution have taught audiences to expect everything instantly and freely. AI tools risk accelerating this race to the bottom. If every story can be generated, summarised, and voiced by a machine, then the act of publishing loses its moral weight. The information economy risks becoming an echo chamber of approximations.

This is not an argument against automation. Used wisely, AI can free human intelligence from repetitive tasks. It can augment research, visualise data, and deepen analysis. But when used indiscriminately, it hollows out the craft it

was meant to serve. The task for leadership is not to resist AI, but to restore discernment to decide what should not be automated.

The opportunity for renewal

Paradoxically, the same technology that is destabilising media may also offer a path to renewal. AI allows us to imagine new forms of content, new experiences of discovery, and new models of engagement. When combined with thoughtful design and human oversight, it can elevate quality rather than dilute it.

For business information providers, the opportunity lies in moving from data delivery to decision support. AI can help transform static information into dynamic intelligence, systems that anticipate rather than report. This requires a different mindset, one that sees technology not as a substitute for expertise but as an amplifier of it.

Events businesses, too, stand to gain. In an age of digital abundance, physical encounters have regained their meaning. AI can enhance this by matching delegates with greater precision, curating sessions dynamically, and capturing insight that once disappeared into the room. The most forward-thinking organisers will use AI not to replace human interaction but to make it more deliberate.

The search for trust

Across all these sectors, the most valuable currency is trust. AI will not remove the need for it; it will heighten it. As synthetic content proliferates, audiences will seek anchors, institutions and individuals whose voice still carries moral weight. That trust cannot be engineered through algorithms. It must be earned through transparency,

editorial discipline, and accountability. Regulation may help, but it will not resolve the deeper issue. The question is not whether AI content is legal, but whether it is authentic. The new frontier of competition will not be who has the most data or the fastest model, but who commands the most trust.

Leadership and the long view

In the coming years, media and events executives will be judged not by how quickly they adopt AI, but by how wisely they integrate it. The leaders who succeed will approach AI neither as a threat nor a miracle, but as a mirror, one that reflects the clarity of their own strategic intent.

The task ahead is to separate what technology can do from what it should do. To build systems that serve curiosity, not replace it. To use automation to liberate the human mind, not diminish it. This requires courage to move beyond short-term gain and to invest in ethical, sustainable innovation.

As I have seen in practice, AI exposes the quality of leadership itself. It forces organisations to confront what they truly value. It reveals whether their purpose is to inform, to influence, or merely to optimise. The answers to those questions will shape not only their commercial future but their moral one.

Conclusion

The media, business information, and events industries now stand at the threshold of a new information order. AI will continue to challenge the assumptions that have guided us for decades - about content, discovery, and trust. Yet within this turbulence lies the possibility of renewal.

If we can learn to use this technology with wisdom and restraint, we may rediscover what drew us to these industries in the first place: the pursuit of understanding, the sharing of truth, the human need to connect.

The future of media will belong not to those who automate everything, but to those who remember what must remain human.

Six reports well worth reading

[AI and the future of news](#) (*Reuters Institute*)

[The Future of Discovery](#) (*FT Strategies*)

[AI and The Future of Content](#) (*FT Strategies*)

[Implications of AI for news distribution](#) (*Stanford University*)

[AI in the News](#) (*Tow Center for Digital Journalism*)

[New Powers, New Responsibilities](#) (*London School of Economics*)

Commercial partners



[Bridged Media](#)

Helps media and events companies turn their audience data into measureable growth



[Labrador CMS](#)

A cloud-based, AI powered CMS, built by journalists for journalists and professional publishers and for the newsrooms that grow fast



CONVERSATION STARTER

[Conversation Starter](#)

Builds matchmaking and community platforms that connect the right people at the right time - in person, hybrid or online - and prove the RoI of every connection



[Playwire](#)

A global revenue amplification company with the knowledge and technology content owners need to maximize revenue and grow their audiences



[Storycue](#)

An AI-powered audience-building and story-planning tool created by audience experts who know what it's like to work in busy newsrooms



[Message Matrix](#)

Your AI-powered instant messaging concierge, accessible through WhatsApp, SMS, or via website and conference apps



[Glide Publishing Platform](#)

Delivers content and audience management tools for media, sport, and publishers, allowing them to prioritise revenue generation and audience growth.



[ONEW3RLD](#)

Storytellers who build, strategists who code, and innovators who create human-centred AI experiences. Our platform doesn't replace people — it amplifies their potential

Further reading

These deepdives from Flashes & Flames are intended to provide the context for today's discussions

What you really need to know about AI

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 29 May 2025

The question that I've been asked most frequently since moderating the panel on AI (hat tip to Amir Malik from Alvarez & Marsal and to Adriana Whiteley from FT Strategies) at the 'Monetising Media' conference in May is: "How much of a threat will AI overviews and LLM's be to publishers' commercial models"?.

The latest research from Webb and Nair (see the report [here](#)) goes some way to answering this, and it's a must-read for any publisher who wants to survive, let alone thrive, as generative AI and retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) reshape how news is created, distributed and monetised.

Here are the bits of the report that I think matter most for publishers - and what you should do next.

The Big Shift: From traffic to transactions

The core finding? AI agents are rapidly becoming the main way that people access news. Instead of visiting publisher

websites, users get complete, context-rich answers from AI chatbots and assistants. That means less traffic to your site, fewer opportunities to convert readers into subscribers and a growing risk that your hard-won brand equity evaporates as AI platforms become the new gatekeepers.

For publishers (perhaps, especially in B2B), who have spent years building direct relationships and high-value subscription models, this is a fundamental threat. If AI agents become the primary distribution channel, the old playbook - drive traffic, convert to subs, upsell events and data - starts to break down.

Stats to wake publishers

● Direct traffic is in decline: According to Webb & Nair, by the end of 2024, only 22% of online news consumers accessed news directly via publisher sites or apps; 25% arrived from search and 29% came via social media. AI agents are set to accelerate this shift away from direct traffic, further eroding direct relationships and site visits.

● AI bots are everywhere: During June-December 2024, AI bot traffic on some news publisher sites jumped from just over 1% to nearly 2.5% - with AI companies scraping sites an average of 2mn times in Q4 2024 alone.

● Referral rates from AI overviews and chatbots are dire: For every scrape of a news site, AI-generated search engines sent users to the original publisher just 0.74% of the time; chatbots did even worse at 0.33%. In contrast, Google Search delivers (on average) a clickthrough rate of 8.6%.

● Ad revenue is no longer king: At the New York Times, only 20% of revenue now comes from ads, with 69% from subscriptions - a total reversal from two decades ago. Of course.

● Search engine traffic is predicted to drop by 25% by 2026, as AI chatbots and virtual agents continue to replace traditional search.

● AI publishing startups have raised over \$200mn since 2022, but this is a drop in the ocean compared with the broader AI market.

● Licensing deals are meaningful, but not transformative: News Corp’s \$250mn, five-year deal with OpenAI will add \$90mn to its 2029 EBITDA - just 14% of the company’s current news profit.

Why “fresh” content still matters

The research makes one thing clear: the real value for publishers now lies in fresh, high-quality, and proprietary content. AI models have already gorged themselves on historical data, much of it without permission. But for up-to-date industry news, analysis, and intelligence,

B2B publishers still have leverage - if they act quickly. Retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) means AI agents will need continuous, real-time access to the latest reporting and data. This is where B2B publishers, with their niche expertise and timely insights, can still command a premium - provided they can negotiate fair licensing - and protect their content from being scraped for free.

Who gets paid and how?

A new ecosystem of AI-news “middleware” is emerging, with startups like TollBit, HumanNative and ScalePost trying to broker licensing deals between

publishers and AI companies. The models vary - some offer pay-per-query micropayments, others broker larger deals or help publishers track usage and negotiate terms.

But here’s the rub: these marketplaces are in their infancy, and the economics are far from clear. Early licensing deals (like News Corp’s \$250mn agreement with OpenAI) may look attractive, but they’re unlikely to replace lost ad or subscription revenue in the long run. And with AI firms holding most of the negotiating power, publishers risk being locked into low-value, opaque agreements that set a poor precedent for the industry.

B2B risks and opportunities

B2B publishers face a slightly different set of challenges—and some unique opportunities:

- Proprietary data is gold: Unlike general news, B2B content is often irreplaceable and not widely available elsewhere. This brings bargaining power - if you can prove your data’s value and protect it from unauthorised scraping.
- Subscriptions beat ads: While the B2B sector has largely already pivoted to subscriptions as the main revenue stream, even this model is at risk if AI agents disintermediate your relationship with readers.
- Brand and trust still matter: AI-generated “slop” can’t replace deep analysis, exclusive interviews or expert commentary. Your brand’s authority is a moat - if you can maintain it.
- Events and Community: B2B events, roundtables and member networks generate proprietary insights and foster direct relationships. These are hard for AI to replicate and can be bundled with content offerings.

Action Plan

- Audit and Tag Your Content: Make sure your archives are structured, well-tagged, and ready for licensing. The

SOLUTION	Model & features	Key points for publishers
TollBit	Two-sided marketplace. Publishers set custom rates for AI bots accessing their content for RAG. Micropayment model.	Lets publishers monetize scraping, set prices, and track AI access. Relies on voluntary compliance by AI firms. “Honesty box” approach means legal clarity will be crucial.
ScalePost	Marketplace brokering structured content licensing deals. Focus on negotiating agreements and tracking usage.	Standardises pricing and terms, helps publishers lacking resources to negotiate directly. Still relatively analogue; not focused solely on RAG yet.
Human Native AI	Marketplace for AI training data. Rights holders upload content, connect with AI companies for revenue share or subscription deals. Offers pricing and copyright monitoring tools.	Designed for both large and small publishers. Aims to lower barriers for smaller AI systems and rights holders, with a focus on transparency and control.
ProRata	Publisher-native AI solution. Builds a subscription AI chatbot, splitting revenue 50/50 with content partners. Patented attribution algorithm ensures fair compensation based on usage.	Major publishers (Financial Times, Axel Springer, The Atlantic, Fortune) are on board. Designed to honour the value of premium content and provide granular attribution.
Miso AI	Builds personalized AI search engines for publisher websites. Also provides research and tools to block AI scrapers.	Focused on helping publishers retain control and combat unauthorized scraping. Research shows widespread violations of robots.txt by AI bots.

more discoverable your content, the more valuable it is to AI platforms.

- Experiment with Marketplaces: Test new licensing platforms, but don't sign away your rights cheaply. Push for transparency and flexibility in all deals.
- Protect your IP: Use technical (and legal) tools to limit unauthorised scraping. Robots.txt is not enough - consider more robust solutions and monitor for bad actors.

- Build direct channels: Double down on newsletters, events and member-only content. Make your audience relationship unmediated and sticky.
- Collaborate, don't isolate: Work with industry bodies to set standards and push for collective bargaining. Fragmentation is your enemy; unity is leverage.
- Innovate with AI, don't just fight It: Explore building your own AI-powered tools and services for your audience.

Don't get Napstered...

The lesson from the past? When one player gives away content for free, the whole market suffers in a classic race to the bottom. B2B publishers can't afford to repeat the mistakes of the early web or the social media era. Act now, set your own terms, and make sure you're building a business that can survive in an AI-first world.

Why AI is just more opportunity for RELX

By Colin Morrison

● FLASHES & FLAMES 1 August 2025

RELX is the 10-year name of a company whose origins as Reed and Elsevier date back to the nineteenth century. It's one of the UK's largest and oldest companies but few Brits beyond the investment community would know any of its brands or the name of the 16-year CEO. Even media industry people know little about the current portfolio of the company that once published many of the country's best-known consumer magazines, regional and national newspapers, and was the world's largest B2B operator of magazines and trade shows.

But this is the multinational information company (listed in London, Amsterdam and New York) which, with a market cap of £72bn (\$95bn), is one of the UK's top 10 companies. Its shares have out-performed almost all others in Erik Engstrom's time as CEO.

Its become a quite different company.

Behind RELX's self-description as "a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers" is a whole world of media history. The

company – previously known as Reed International and Reed Elsevier – was once an integrated producer of paper all the way from the forests and mills to wallpaper, packaging, newspapers, books, directories, and magazines. It also manufactured paint and building materials. Forty years ago, the then CEO had described his strategy as the "5ps" – paper, paint, packaging, print and publishing. He wasn't joking.

Engstrom (the former Elsevier CEO who had been a McKinsey consultant) has developed an altogether more sophisticated strategy: "Our strategic priority is the organic development



Engstrom: the 'unknown' CEO who has transformed RELX

of increasingly sophisticated decision tools that deliver enhanced value... by leveraging deep customer understanding to build innovative solutions which combine leading content and data sets with powerful technologies."

At a time when media companies of all types, sizes and geographies face the formidable challenges of AI, having scarcely stabilised their strategies in the era of Google search and social networks, RELX could write the book on transformation in the media and information industries. This is the corporation which, at the dawn of the internet 25 years ago, was 64% dependant on print revenues; today it's just 4%. It's a £10bn-revenue, technology-led business employing more than 36,000 people serving professionals in STM/academic information, Law and Risk. It's also the world's second largest trade show organiser. Some 60% of its revenue comes from North America, with 20% each from Europe and the rest of the world.

When Bank of America produced a list of the businesses "most likely to benefit from generative AI", RELX (which had

been using pre-generative AI for more than a decade) was the only UK company in the top 10.

Its financials show it has succeeded not only in transforming its business but also in consistently growing revenue, profit and even headcount, during what have been unpromising times for many legacy companies.

In 2025, RELX will have increased revenue by 35% and EBITDA by 46% in five years. Pushing up profit margins to 39% (from 36% in 2021) speaks volumes for the performance, but so too does the consistently double-digit growth in underlying profits. For all the fact that it has invested in substantial acquisitions (especially in the powering Risk division), RELX's organic growth is even more impressive.

Until last year, Elsevier - the STM/ academic division formerly managed by Erik Engstrom - was the largest revenue generator in RELX. It's best known for The Lancet but actually publishes some 3,000 journals, mostly digital. The publishers will proudly tell you that all but one of the 244 science and economics Nobel Prize winners since 2000 have been published with Elsevier. Yes.

Despite its pre-eminence, the demise of Elsevier (and other STM journal publishers) was long predicted by grumbling researchers who had to

pay to access the content to which they themselves had been required to contribute, in order to be reviewed by their peers. Against the odds, Elsevier (and others) have maintained their businesses by adopting "open access", giving authors the choice of paying to publish OR paying to read (subscription model). Its estimated 17% share of the world's STM output has been hugely enhanced by its ScienceDirect platform for peer-reviewed research, now being augmented by AI which is said to save scholars, researchers and librarians some 50% of the time spent on literature research.

The company's ScopusAI - which curates abstracts from the peer-reviewed research in more than 30,000 journals, is now being used by over 5,000 universities worldwide. Interestingly, Elsevier is investing in AI tools to safeguard the integrity of research, helping to identify fraudulent research. Its also launched what is claimed to be the world's first 3D female anatomy model (as well as models for diversity) in major steps for the diagnostic services of the medical profession.

RELX's commitment to maximising the opportunities of AI may be best illustrated by its decade-long use by the company's LexisRisk Solutions (the Risk division) which provides banks, insurers, airlines, governments and others with

information to help assess risks posed by fraud, cybercrime and corruption. The US-based group is said to analyse more than 170mn transactions daily. More than 200k websites and mobile apps use its Digital Identity Network. It is satisfying the growing need for companies to authenticate who people and companies are, and assessing the risk of fraud or default.

What is now the largest and fastest-growing division in RELX (having

supplanted STM in 2024) accounts for more than 35% of revenue. But the soaring analytics provide a 'best practice' guide to how B2B magazine publishers can turn themselves into high-value information businesses. The former Reed Business Information (RBI) was once the world's largest B2B publisher with hundreds of magazines on everything from farming and transport to computing and hospitality. In the 1960s and 1970s, it had consolidated the "trade magazine" business in the same way as its one-time sister company IPC had done in consumer magazines. Its weeklies had been turbocharged by the UK boom in national recruitment advertising. By 2001, RBI was brought together with Reed's Cahners subsidiary in the US. Its revenue was £1bn.

Fast forward 10 years and profits were down by one-third, with just 25% from the US. By the time, it sold the legendary Hollywood trade newspaper Variety, RBI had exited B2B magazines in the US and divested a total of more than 150 print titles in 14 countries that just four years before had represented almost 50% of its portfolio.

RBI was put up for sale but nobody wanted to pay the price.

The upshot was a 35% slide in 2009 profits and what CEO Mark Kelsey describes as "absolute crisis..In many ways we felt like an orphan, not wanted, not quite sure what to do." That was the year Erik Engstrom was appointed CEO of what became RELX. He changed the focus.

This largest and fastest growing RELX division - believe it or not - grew out of the company's former portfolio of B2B magazines and directories. Its long-established Bankers Almanac directory - along with the LexisNexis acquisition itself - provided the seed corn that created the mighty Risk division. And smaller information and consulting operations in aviation (Cirium), petrochemicals (ICIS) and HR (Brightmine) serve as a reminder of a company which once published B2B magazines in these and hundreds of other market verticals.

SNAPSHOT RELX PLC

£bn	2025*	2024	2023	2022	2021
Rev	9.7	9.4	9.2	8.6	7.2
Ebitda	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.2	2.6
Margin	39%	39%	38%	37%	36%
People		36.4k	36.5k	35.7k	33.5k
Divisional revenue					
STM	2.7	2.6	3.1	2.9	2.6
Risk	3.5	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.5
Legal	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.6
Exhibs	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.5
Print**	0.4	0.5			
Organic profit growth		10%	13%	15%	13%

*Flashes & Flames estimate **Print was formerly included in STM

The once-moribund RBI has - under Mark Kelsey - become the Risk division, the star performer of RELX. In 2024, its underlying revenue was up 8% and operating profit 9% ahead. All its £3.2bn revenue was from transactions and subscriptions - and it's all over AI.

It's a similar (though less spectacular) story at the RELX legal division where large reference books have been transformed into the AI-powered Lexis database of legal documents. It enables lawyers to search and synthesise huge amounts of information quickly. It even offers "intelligent legal drafting" and seems likely (whisper it) to have a yet more important role in a future where AI is predicted to give legal customers the ability to reduce their dependence on lawyers. RELX's Protege is described as "the next-generation legal generative assistant which allows lawyers to integrate existing work product, while providing personalised and trusted assistance". The divisional CEO describes his medium-term roadmap as being "to integrate customer content and personalised AI for specific legal personas". AI had created stronger demand for the company's legal reference, helping revenue to grow 7% last year,

The RX exhibitions subsidiary's 300 events include the World Travel Market, Big Data LDN, Mipcom, Comicon, and Fastener Fair. It increased revenue by 11% in 2024, back to the pre-pandemic peak revenue of 2019. Most major trade show operators talk up the increasing role of AI and digital tools to improve outcomes for exhibitors and visitors alike. The RX CEO Hugh Jones, who previously managed data operations including for RELX, is providing tech solutions for exhibitors tracking, analysing and communicating with visitors and vice versa. It's all focused on enabling trade show participants to maximise the effectiveness of their attendance, not least by arranging meetings, information gathering and follow-up. One of the RX post-event data services enables exhibitors to compare

their results with those of others.

The pandemic - as well as persuading everyone that virtual events were no substitute for face-to-face exhibitions - was a catalyst for the development of data solutions, not least to build year-round digital relationships. There is a real incentive for event companies to improve the quality of their earnings through the integration with data, and it would be no surprise if RX does not become an innovative AI leader among trade show organisers.

That's how RELX does things.

After all, its corporate website currently promotes (an incomplete) 14 AI products launched for the likes of lawyers, scientists, clinicians, aviation professionals and HR executives. That and the profit projections which will see RELX revenue reaching £10bn (50% up in five years) this year or next, is the story of the transformation, now accelerating in the era of generative AI.

That's why nobody mentions the 1995 prediction by Forbes magazine that the then Reed Elsevier would become the first corporate casualty of the internet. Ouch!

For media and information companies (and many others) the lessons of RELX - beyond the seemingly simple task of formulating a robust, enduring strategy - include making realistic levels of investment in technology people, systems and acquisitions that can create a future-proofed company. Like many other media companies, it had a history of generating scale economies from print, paper and distribution. It has replaced this outdated philosophy with the technology and skills which have transformed the company and all its operations.

Almost 20 years after Axel Springer's Mathias Döpfner said that media and information companies needed to 'get' technology before the tech companies 'get' content, RELX has become the very image of a 21st century information-tech group. Even more than Springer

itself, RELX has shown how - with determination and strong leadership - legacy companies really can match the innovation of new, all-digital competition.

RELX employs no fewer than 12,000 technologists (one-third of the total workforce) and invests a claimed £1.5bn (\$2bn) annually in tech. They're steeped in AI and, when generative AI came along, it was yet more opportunity: "While extractive AI is relevant for machine-to-machine interactions, generative AI is particularly relevant for human-to-machine interactions, such as lawyers, doctors or medical researchers. When combining extractive AI with trusted content, you can make a real difference. Applying generative AI tools can be transformative."

Its enthusiasm for (and profit from) generative AI matches those of the strongest Silicon Valley tech giants. That's why investors love RELX.

But we may also be impressed by two other things.

First, RELX's largest and fastest growing division (Risk) has been led by a lifer (Mark Kelsey) whose operations had once been the group's worst legacy performer - before he systematically ditched the huge portfolio of print magazines and shared in the ramp-up of technology.

Second, it has recently separated in its financials some £400mn of legacy print (from STM/academic publishing) as being managed for maximum profit and, presumably, eventually for sale. Even for RELX, that's 4% of current revenue.

That's just the latest example of how the one-time legacy publisher continues to succeed in the 'new' world because it is clear-eyed about the future and where it's going. CEO Erik Engstrom could have kept the print rump (and its high-margin profit) hidden. But, if he was more publicity conscious (another success secret of the under-recognised RELX?) he might remind us that transformation (now powered by AI) is a journey not a destination. It just carries on.

Is AI disclosure really an imperative?

By Chris Sutcliffe

● FLASHES & FLAMES 31 July 2025

Generative AI (GenAI) is upending news content creation and consumption. A recent study demonstrated that GenAI summaries are having a tangible negative impact on clickthrough rates for news publications: users who did not encounter an AI summary clicked through on a search result nearly twice as often as those who did (15% versus 8%).

It's a reminder that GenAI is already impacting how users discover news and information. Beyond that, however, there are deepening questions about the extent to which publishers' own use of GenAI is impacting their relationship with audiences.

For example, after Vogue used AI models (that is, AI generated images of models) in its latest issue, some readers anecdotally decided to cancel their subscriptions.

Per research from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, participants in a study related to AI in news creation returned nuanced views on its use. Many respondents argued that they were comfortable with news outlets they already trust using AI in the creation of news articles. Respondents noted there was nuance in which topics and verticals should use GenAI, with "serious" imagery and subject matter being considered to be off-limits for AI - at this stage.

A majority of respondents also "told us that if a news organisation used AI to create significant volumes of content, ultimately they would trust the brand less (and eventually stop using it)." That recognition, of course, requires that said news organisation discloses the use of AI to begin with. Respondents also believed that use of AI for behind-the-scenes

'mechanical' uses was more benign. Instead, the researchers found that where GenAI was used in a 'front of house' sense, where it usurped the human and emotional aspect of journalism, it was associated with a lowered perception of the value of the content.

Overall, then, respondents noted that disclosure of use of AI was necessary and desirable - specifically in areas where an essential 'humanity' was present in the reporting.

Many publishers have already recognised the potential reputational damage that comes from a lack of disclosure.

In the UK, for example, the Daily Telegraph's Ukraine podcast uses voice-cloning technology to make the audio available to listeners in both Ukraine and Russia. Arguably, that requires disclosure, but the Telegraph says: "We had an extended marketing campaign around the launch of these AI translations. We published articles making it very, very clear that the translated episodes were going to be translated by AI. In the podcast descriptions, it basically says, 'this episode of Ukraine: The Latest is brought to you with the help of cutting edge AI technology. It's here to help present our journalism, not to produce it.'"

That sentiment was also echoed by the BBC which, in June, launched a pilot to incorporate GenAI into its reporting. The New York Times, too, updates its explanatory page around its AI use regularly, explicitly citing the potential hit to trust if it were found to have broken those guidelines within the article.

That is very much in line with recent recommendations published by the US non-profit Trusting News. Its research found that "87% [of respondents] said

that an AI disclosure should include the reasons why reporters used AI and 92% said they would want to know that a human was involved in vetting AI-generated information".

The need to disclose the use of AI in news content is one that could potentially be legislated for as with the [AI Disclosure Act of 2023](#) in the US. Many publishers, however, are trying to get ahead of that by creating frameworks for disclosure of where AI is used in their own content. BuzzFeed, for example, cited its GenAI tool 'Buzzy' as co-author on articles as early as 2023 - though it was noted that there was a lack of transparency around its use.

It could similarly also be required by third-party platforms that disseminate news content: the video game platform Steam requires that any AI use is labelled as such on the store pages of games. Earlier this year, the game *The Alters* was found to have used AI translation and GenAI in game, despite not having disclosed its use, which led to a backlash and accusations of 'spitting in the face of [its] international audience'.

The reputational damage from a lack of disclosure, then, is very real. And, if that is the case for entertainment media, how much worse could it be for news publications whose reputation is predicated on accuracy and truthfulness?

That need for disclosure has been heightened by a number of controversies where the use of GenAI was undisclosed, or not adequately labelled. In April 2023, *Die Aktuelle* promoted "the first interview" with reclusive Formula 1 driver Michael Schumacher on its cover. Upon the revelation that the "deceptive real"-sounding quotes were in fact

AI-generated, the Schumacher family successfully sued – a real-world financial consequence of mislabelling GenAI-written content.

So, if GenAI summaries are cutting off clickthrough for publishers, and audiences expect its use within newsrooms to be contained and disclosed, what opportunities does it even afford to news publishers?

Well, there is a commercial imperative to that disclosure, obviously, since breaches can and have led to fines and monetary forfeits – and it’s still early days for that legislation. But, more than that, there is a potential commercial benefit to disclosing its use in journalism – in that it highlights where it has not been used.

As the Reuters Institute research demonstrates, news consumers associate human created emotion and context with

good journalism: “Even in the US, it was noticeable how little involvement people wanted AI to have in creating most news content”.

It is, in effect, a point of differentiation for publications who want to highlight the work of their individual journalists – who are often one of the main reasons people choose to support publications.

Many publications are already recognising that it is ill-advised to remove that human element from their writing. Venturebeat’s senior AI reporter Emelia David told Columbia Journalism Review: “I believe that people reading earnings stories or news around sporting events – news sometimes written using AI tools – deserve the respect of hearing the news from humans who better understand why people need to know about this specific news. Human journalists bring the context to news

stories to their human readers.”

Research by Professors Weyue Chen of Butler University and Esther Thorson of Michigan State University ranked the six top reasons why audiences pay to support particular news outlets. The second reason in that ranking was that of ‘journalism quality’: “Subscribers value accurate, fair, and in-depth reporting, especially on national and global issues.”

As the research from Trusting News demonstrates, audiences are less likely to believe that GenAI news articles – with or without human oversight – are liable to hit those standards of quality. That provides those news publications which are using AI disclosure to prove their journalism is largely human-created, with a marketing opportunity – and a potential boost to their reader revenue strategies and reputation.

How AI really can boost media content

By Colin Morrison

● FLASHES & FLAMES 16 May 2025

Let’s face it, Artificial Intelligence means very many different things to different people – in media as everywhere else. We should, arguably, avoid discussion about whether media content should carry some kind of reference to AI having been part of its preparation (when we wouldn’t have expected to cite the range of sources or types of information-gathering used previously).

But it is becoming clear that AI-powered information-gathering can augment the resources, especially of smaller content teams. It can add to the journalism not subtract from it.

In some ways, AI in content preparation is nothing new, of course. It is but a

progression of Google search which itself is powered by layers of algorithms and machine learning that help surface stories, track developments and verify information. Many journalists already rely on it as a discovery tool, using keyword-driven search to spot trends, check sourcing or find angles worth pursuing.

Beyond that, we know that this accelerated search will sharpen the distinction between freely available content and the exclusive, distinctive information that might increasingly be the only content for which many readers would need (or be prepared) to pay. Nobody doubts that the idea of this “super search” is already disrupting media (like it was when jobs classifieds moved from paid-for publications to free

online sites). But it is now possible to see that AI might bring the unexpected benefit of increasing the value of that relatively “ordinary” news and information – by substantially improving it.

Information providers must still (more than ever) take seriously the need to build unique, distinctive content that becomes the magnet for paying reader-users. But, meanwhile, the increasingly well-researched (and, presumably, AI-powered) non-exclusive content can also add to the audience appeal of an information service, whether in print or digital.

Nowhere will that magic combination of smart, AI-powered aggregation AND



Massow: "Our system enhances journalism not replaces it"

exclusive information/data be more valuable than in B2B media where brands are fighting to maintain their roles as leaders in demanding specialist sectors with the support of fewer and fewer journalists.

That's the pitch of NoahWire, a news service which claims to supercharge publishers' ability to find stories: "It's easy to get distracted by its use of AI, but NoahWire allows users to discover and access relevant content quicker and with greater specificity than before. The use of semantic search is what makes it unique; this produces a far greater depth of output than keywords."

Those are the words of Alan Hunter, media strategy consultant and former Times of London editor and digital executive, who adds: "I've used NoahWire for Tomorrow's Publisher for the past few months and I've been amazed at how quickly it gets onto both the biggest stories and those from markets which were otherwise opaque to me. Just in the past few days I've been alerted to stories in Japan, Korea, Mexico and Australia."

Hunter, who is co-founder of HBM Advisory, is not exactly an independent voice since he is collaborating with Noah on its marketing to publishers. The all-digital Tomorrow's Publisher is a shop window both for Noah and HBM. But he is helping to make the "new" case for the fact that AI (among other things) can augment (and, ultimately, enrich) journalism after decades during which staffing and resources have been hollowed out.

Of course, not all AI tools are equal. Some

will produce better information (whether as source material for journalists or as low-cost machine-produced aggregation) than others - and the standards will keep rising.

That's the view of the Noah owner, Ivan Massow, a former financial services and digital entrepreneur and sometime political candidate in the UK, who had left school at 16 without qualifications. He has spent the last two years developing NoahWire and now has hundreds of media companies and corporates beta testing (and some even as paying customers). It started to get real traction, with serious interest from major companies and from publishers large and small, especially at recent conferences in the UK and Poland.

NoahWire began as a publishing platform built for B2B publishers and journalists. Massow says: "We started beta testing with Emap (owned by Metropolis) using a handful of free RSS feeds. But, over the past two years, we've expanded dramatically — now indexing millions of sources from governments, press releases, institutions, markets, exchanges, blogs, social media commentary, and more. We've also added licensed premium content and proprietary feeds, shifting our focus to delivering hyper-verified, high-value intelligence."

Massow confronts "the ethical unease" around machines reading the news: "While understandable, it's important to remember why we publish at all. Journalism has always been about reach - about informing others, spreading knowledge and shaping public discourse. It's not content written for one person at a time; it's written to be shared, interpreted and acted upon. Blocking

AI from learning from this content cuts against the fundamental purpose of publishing in the first place."

Warming to his theme, he says: "The system doesn't replace journalism — it enhances it. It handles the heavy lifting: surfacing potential stories, gathering supporting and conflicting context, and compiling everything into a structured report with line-by-line, in-text citations. This means journalists no longer start from a blank page and can instead focus on structuring their pieces, conducting interviews, and pursuing deeper investigations. NoahWire also allows users to create personal feeds around niche verticals — whether marine engineering, defence, fintech or something more obscure. We deliver all relevant coverage in real time, so journalists can easily spot emerging stories, track trends, or use the system to explore a topic they're researching by simply asking a question."

While Noah started in publishing, it's now expanding also into corporate intelligence, with banks and consulting firms beginning to implement the platform for internal analysis. They see the same value in surfacing insights quickly and building rigorous, verifiable reports.

We have seen a demonstration of how detailed, analytical reports can add to Noah's appeal to B2B media and might, if anything, present more of a threat to some areas of management consultancy than to publishing. For B2B data providers already pushing into advisory services, this level of research support feels like a real business opportunity on its own.

PUBLISHERS - THOUGHT LEADERS - CONTENT MAKERS - JOURNALISTS

**SLASH COSTS
AND SAVE TIME
WITH OUR
NICHE WIRES**

Revolutionise your content

Noah: a 21st century version of the age-old newswire?

Massow says: “We want to become the Reuters of the B2B market.” He cites the Emap brand New Civil Engineer as one client which has a fraction of the staffing and resources of its halcyon days but now (with just three or four reporters) gets up to seven stories a day “so one journalist can find the story while the others go and do other writing and interviews.”

But, for all the B2B brands that Massow is canvassing, he’s also attracting interest from some of the UK’s largest news companies. They may be worrying a bit about the potential opposition to come from anxious journalists but they have long depended on the newswires of agencies like Reuters, Press Association and Associated Press. Perhaps these organisations could also become clients of companies like Noah?

Inevitably, the whole involvement of AI in news prompts thoughts of royalties and

commission payments to the publishers of original material. After all, large payments are being made by the likes of News Corp to AI developers for the use of their entire archives.

Noah says it checks - and respects - Robots.txt commands from the websites it scrapes and also now uses premium and paid-for content. There’s still some way to go for the story to unfold about how publishers’ content is actually used by armies of bots. For now, Noah is on the right side of publishers. When it gets funding and starts to scale and generate profit, the balance may tip.

On the other hand, is Noah so different to The Week - the news digest magazine published successfully in the UK and US for the past 30 years - which has never paid royalties for the content it “reviews”, summarises or reports on?

Massow’s description of his service as

a ‘newswire’ is a smart way to calm the potential opposition. But he knows he’s in a race to build market share not only in the UK but also in the US – before someone bigger and richer enters the market.

That’s why he’s retained the services of a London banker to secure investment - preferably from strategic investors that would bring more than just money. He wants to raise some £8-25mn for a step-up in sales and marketing as well as systems development.

But it’s a race.

That’s why - instead of raising cash from hands-off investors - Ivan Massow might just try hard to persuade one or more of the news agencies on either side of the Atlantic to become his partners. Can NoahWire be a key to their own future, a 21st century version of what they’ve been doing for decades?

We must fight for new rules not against tech

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 1 May 2025

Despicable people.” That’s how Justine Bateman describes the tech leaders behind today’s Gen AI revolution. (You can read her full quote [here](#)). Her outrage is shared by a growing chorus of publishers, journalists and artists who see their work being scraped, repurposed and monetised by AI companies with little regard for consent or compensation.

While B2B publishers may not be in the spotlight of this topic for now; the scale of AI-driven content theft is bigger than you might think (more on that to come later in this article); there is some urgency for publishers to rethink and to advocate for a system where innovation doesn’t come at the expense of creators.

Modern copyright law began with a simple, revolutionary idea: creators deserve to control - and profit from - their work. The Statute of Anne, enacted in Great Britain in 1710, was the world’s first copyright law, granting authors exclusive rights for a fixed term. Before then, the Stationers’ Company - the historic London venue of our Monetising B2B conference on 20 May - held a monopoly, stifling both competition and creativity. The Statute of Anne broke that grip, introducing the concept of copyright as a tool to encourage learning and reward innovation.

Three centuries later, the technology has changed, but the fear is eerily familiar. Back then, it was printing presses. In the

1990s, it was the internet. Now, it’s AI-specifically, the relentless bots scraping publisher content to feed the data-hungry engines of generative AI.

The scale of the scraping problem

If you think this is a niche concern, think again. Exclusive research by Miso.ai, shared at a recent FIPP x PPA webinar in the UK, revealed just how rampant AI-powered scraping has become.

They inspected over 2,700 publisher sites that had set up robots.txt “Disallow” commands (the digital equivalent of a “No Trespassing” sign) against AI scrapers.

Collectively, these publishers were trying to block more than 1,300 unique bots - far more than most expected.

But here's the kicker:

- The average publisher is only targeting about 15 bots each.
- Just 15% of publishers are actively blocking Google Extended, the tool that lets sites opt out of having their content used for training Google's AI models.
- Even when publishers explicitly say "no" to bots like Perplexity, 15-20% still see their article content show up in the Perplexity chatbot. For homepages, that figure jumps to 65-70%, and for images, it's as high as 66%.

In short: the bots are not listening. The old tools aren't working.

A global battle for intellectual property

Hundreds of US news organisations have joined the News Media Alliance's "Support Responsible AI" campaign, calling on lawmakers to make AI developers pay for the content used to train generative models. "Stealing is un-American. Tell Washington to make Big Tech pay for the content it takes," reads the campaign's message.

Danielle Coffey, president and CEO of the News Media Alliance, put it bluntly: "Big Tech and AI companies are using publishers' own content against them, taking it without authorisation or compensation to power AI products that pull advertising and subscription revenue away from the original creators."

In the UK, publishers have rallied behind a similar "Make it Fair" campaign and investigative journalist Carole Cadwalladr has accused OpenAI's Sam Altman of outright data theft, calling the unauthorised use of her work "more than theft. It's a violation".

Why B2B publishers should care

For B2B publishers, the issue of data

theft doesn't just represent a hit to the bottom line; it has the potential to be an existential threat. Unlike consumer media, B2B publishing is built on the value of proprietary, high-quality information. When AI scrapers harvest that content without permission, they're not just stealing traffic - they're siphoning off the very product that subscribers pay for. Worse, as AI models get better at summarising, paraphrasing and "remixing" this content, it becomes harder to trace the original source. Publishers risk losing both credit and compensation, while AI companies profit from the data.

The legal grey zone

Why is this happening? Because copyright law, designed for a world of books and newspapers, is struggling to keep up with the realities of AI. The law still revolves around the idea of a human author. But AI models don't "copy" in the traditional sense - they ingest and learn from billions of data points, then generate new content based on patterns.

Recent lawsuits are forcing courts to wrestle with questions such as:

- Does using copyrighted material to train an AI model count as infringement?
- Is it "fair use" if the model doesn't reproduce the original work verbatim?
- Who is the "author" when a machine creates something new?

So far, the answers are muddy. In the US, the Copyright Office has rejected copyright claims for AI-generated works unless there's clear human authorship. In Canada, courts have ruled that scraping can constitute infringement, but enforcement is patchy at best.

The futility of Robots.txt - and what comes next

Most publishers start with robots.txt and meta tags, telling bots what they can and can't access. But as the stats above show, many AI scrapers simply ignore

these signals. Even the best-intentioned protocols are toothless if the other side isn't playing by the rules.

That's why publishers are turning to a mix of technical and legal tactics:

- **Explicit Terms of Service:** Make it crystal clear that scraping and AI training are forbidden. This provides a legal basis for action, even if it doesn't stop the bots.
- **Copyright Notices:** Mark every page and asset. It's not a shield, but it helps in disputes.
- **Honeypots and CAPTCHAs:** Trap and block unsanctioned bots.

vAdvanced Bot Management: Companies like HUMAN use machine learning to detect and block unwanted AI scrapers before they even make a request.

- **Watermarking:** For images and videos, watermarks can deter unauthorised use and prove provenance.

Yet the reality is these are speed bumps, not roadblocks.

The real solution: Licensing and new infrastructure

If history teaches us anything, it's that the answer isn't to fight technology - it's to adapt the rules of engagement. The Statute of Anne didn't ban printing presses; it made them work for authors. The internet didn't kill copyright; it forced a rethink. With AI, the best hope is building a system where creators get paid and AI companies get access - legally, transparently and at scale.

Licensing is the way forward

AI companies need vast, high-quality data. Publishers have it. The missing link? Infrastructure that makes licensing simple, enforceable and valuable for both sides.

New platforms are emerging to fill this gap. Startups like Tollbit, Human Native AI and Story Protocol are examples of marketplaces where publishers can

upload, tag and license their content for AI training-on their terms. These platforms offer granular control: publishers decide what's open or closed, set prices, and track usage. Blockchain technology is being explored to add transparency and traceability to licensing deals.

The trust issue

Of course, publishers are wary of yet more tech vendors. Many of us were burned by the adtech gold rush, where intermediaries pocketed the profits. But the alternative - doing nothing - means watching your unique content become free training data for the next wave of AI disruptors.

What should B2B publishers do now?

- Audit your defences: Update robots.txt, terms of service, and copyright notices.
- Invest in bot management: Don't rely on basic tools-deploy advanced detection and blocking.
- Prepare your archive: Tag and organise your content so it's ready for licensing.
- Explore licensing platforms: Start conversations with emerging marketplaces.
- Advocate for better law: Join industry efforts to push for copyright reform that recognises the realities of AI.

The bottom line

Every time technology slashes the cost of copying or creating content, we hit a moment of friction. The Statute of Anne, the internet, and now AI-each era has forced us to ask: how do we protect creators without stifling innovation? It's not a new problem, but it is a new era. The tools have changed, but the tension remains. Now, it's time for publishers, lawmakers, and technologists to build a system that reflects the world we live in today - where AI is here to stay, but creators still get their due.

Licensing isn't just the best answer. It's the only one that scales. And for B2B publishers, it's the path to turning a threat into a new revenue stream - before the bots eat your lunch.

How to avoid the 'teenage' hype about AI

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 27 March 2025

I don't know about you but, from time to time, I get a little weary of the AI hype train. It's like teenagers exaggerating their romantic experiences, claiming numerous conquests despite having none. It's the same with companies boasting about supposedly being on top of AI.

Just like teens learn from their experiences (the good, the bad and the awkward), media companies need to figure out AI, learn how to use it right, and apply it to solve real problems or boost productivity. As companies get more comfortable with AI, they'll move past just using it for the sake of using it and focus on how it can genuinely make their operations better.

I caught up with Amir Malik, Managing Director EMEA for Alvarez & Marsal, and Adriana Whitely from FT Strategies,

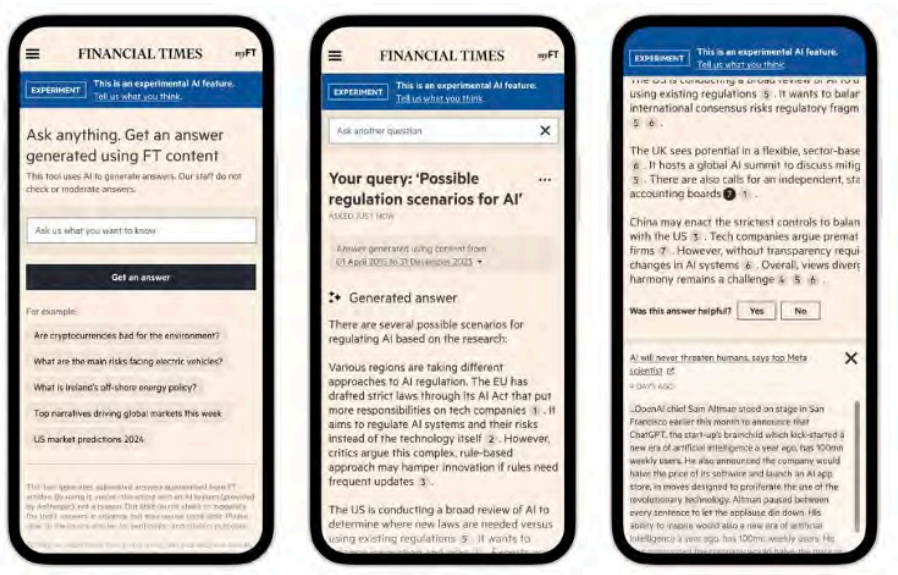
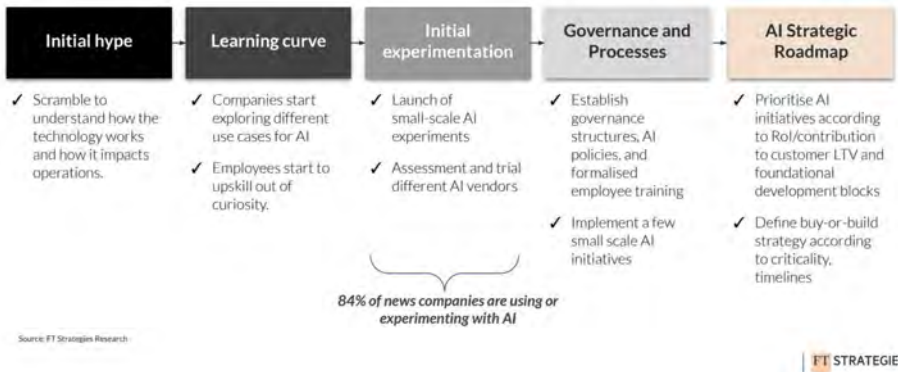
to get some direct insights into the AI implementation work they are leading for media brands. I also spoke with Angie Ma, Co-Founder of Faulty AI, who shared some fascinating practical insights learned over 10 years in the business of deploying technology-led solutions for some of the UK's most important institutions including the UK Government and the National Health Service.

In this piece, I am ditching the hype in order to focus on the practical stuff that actually makes a difference. Starting with FT Strategies which is well known in the UK and US for helping media brands navigate transformation and technological change. About a year ago, it launched its own generative AI tool, AskFT. I asked Adriana about the reasons for developing it, as well as successes and key learnings so far

Adriana Whitely

"AskFT is designed to assist FT Professional subscribers by providing them with quick access to relevant information from the FT's extensive archives. The tool works by identifying semantically similar article segments to a user's question and then using a large language model (LLM) to summarise these segments into a concise answer. This approach not only helps users quickly grasp complex topics but also ensures that the information is grounded in trusted FT content, complete with citations to the original articles.

"The primary objective behind the development of AskFT was to enhance the value proposition for its professional subscribers. Our aim was to create a tool that would help users better understand



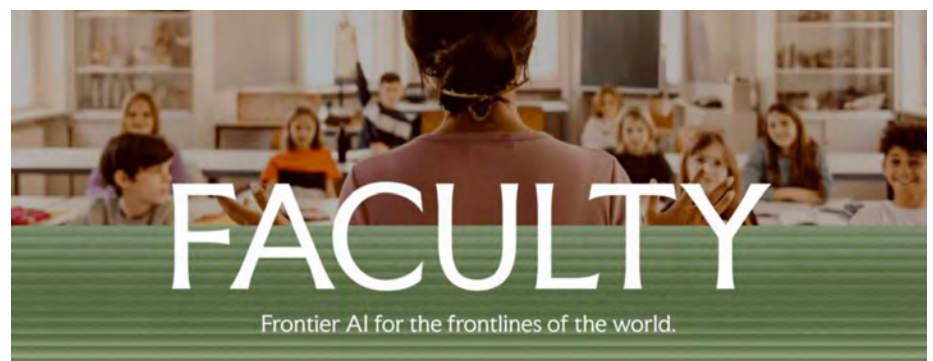
emerging news contexts and quickly gain insights into new companies or clients. This aligns with the broader trend in media, where publishers are experimenting with AI-driven chatbots to offer dynamic reader experiences. Other examples include Ask Skift and Forbes’ Adelaide; both of which are practical examples of a shift towards more interactive and personalised content delivery.

“A key challenge in developing AskFT was managing the risks associated with generative AI, such as hallucinations - where models produce information not grounded in reality. To mitigate these risks, the FT employed a model-agnostic approach, testing multiple models to find the best fit for their needs. They also emphasise transparency with users, clearly indicating that answers are machine-generated and not fact-checked.

The initial feedback from AskFT’s beta testing has been promising, with 75% of

users finding the tool helpful. The FT is now focusing on integrating AskFT more seamlessly into users’ workflows, enhancing features such as search saving and answer refinement. This evolution underscores the importance of continuous user feedback in refining AI tools to meet real-world needs.

“In general, we think about technology deployment as a framework, and we typically support and advise businesses with the strategy, governance & processes



and delivery of a roadmap to take them to where they want to get to”.

Angie Ma

My second conversation was with Angie Ma, Co-Founder of Faculty AI.

Faculty is one of Europe’s leading applied AI companies; they have advised and supported organisations through major digital transformations, including Beazley (A FTSE 100 business; one of the world’s leading specialty commercial insurers), the UK National Health Service, Novartis and the UK Government. Faculty AI has just celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

I asked Angie for a key lesson she’s learned over the past decade, and of a common danger to be avoided.

“A key lesson and piece of advice I now always recommend is to Build in increments that are individually valuable and collectively transformative.

“What we’ve seen consistently over the years is that unambitious AI programmes usually underwhelm. Don’t just focus on low-hanging fruit. Or on single use cases. That’s not how you make a measurable difference to the overall performance of an organisation. At the same time, over-ambitious AI programmes usually underdeliver too. It is very risky to try and imagine the whole future at once and seek a big bang. The right balance is to think big, but build forwards in modular steps. Each individual module should be quick to implement and valuable on its own terms. But modules should also be designed so that when connected together, they transform a whole process end to end.



Amir Malik

Next up, I met up with Amir Malik, Managing Director EMEA for Alvarez & Marsal.

Amir has been leading digital transformation projects for more than 15 years and has a deep wealth of knowledge and experience of how AI can help accelerate business strategy.

We discussed a broad range of topics, but there was one area that Amir talked about which is particularly well suited to B2B media and information. Hyper-Personalised Automated Agents.

Here's some of what Amir had to say about the emergence and application of Hyper-Personalised Automated Agents. (HPA Agents)

"When it comes to staying on top of industry developments, we've all been

there - scrolling through endless reports, trying to find insights that really matter for our businesses. That's where HPA agents come in, revolutionising the way we can discover relevant content, information and insights with hyper-personalised efficiency. Deploying AI-powered HPA agents brings five distinct advantages over traditional tools:

1. Autonomy and adaptability

HPA agents are like smart business analysts working independently, making real-time decisions without explicit instructions. They quickly adapt to changing market landscapes and your evolving business interests. Unlike traditional tools with static rules, these AI agents learn from your interactions, becoming more attuned to your industry focus daily.

2. Hyper-Personalisation

Imagine getting updates on supply chain disruptions, competitor movements, or regulatory changes tailored specifically for your vertical. An HPA agent can analyse your organisation's priorities and market context to deliver intelligence that matters most. Traditional tools use basic keyword filtering, but HPA Agents can be trained to understand the nuances of your business interests.

3. Efficiency and scalability

B2B intelligence can be overwhelming.

We've deployed HPA agents into businesses which process vast amounts of data in seconds and summarise complex market reports into actionable insights. In the context of a busy B2B new-gathering operation, it does much of the heavy lifting involved to ensure that the editorial teams stay informed without drowning in information. Where traditional content aggregation tools struggle can struggle with the sheer volume and relevance of industry news an HPA agent can handle it effortlessly.

4. Dynamic content curation

These AI agents predict emerging industry trends and categorise information on the fly. You get timely updates on developments impacting your sector. Traditional tools often rely on manual updates, leaving you with less relevant content about your vertical.

5. Integration with Multiple Sources

HPA agents can tap into diverse sources - from industry conference transcripts, specialised podcasts and professional networks to technical papers and complex data - giving you a comprehensive market view that traditional tools simply can't match. In short, HPA agents could end up being powerful B2B intelligence sidekicks - smarter, faster, and more personalised than traditional tools for organisations looking to stay ahead of the curve.

AI Wrappers: the 'simple' way for publishers

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 27 February 2025

Want to fast-forward your business into the future? Ideally you need a racy DeLorean car. But tinkering with flux capacitors and plutonium can get messy. AI Wrappers are like hiring Doc Brown - they handle the technical wizardry, so you can just

hop in and enjoy the ride. (Apologies to those too young or too old to savour the Back to the Future movies). I am exploring how media companies can harness AI to build innovative products and rapidly enhance their workflows - even with limited resources. I'm a strong advocate for publishers actively

embracing AI tools to help drive growth and transformation. Of course. But I've noticed that some of the publishers I work with often find that the sheer complexity of direct API integrations proves a barrier. If your tech and product dev teams are telling you that it'll be weeks before they can start the discovery

work for integrating AI tools, the concept of AI Wrappers offers an elegant solution for integrating AI without drowning in code.

AI Wrappers act as intermediaries, simplifying interactions between users and complex AI models. Think of them as interpreters, translating your instructions into language that the AI understands, and then presenting the AI's response in a user-friendly way. They abstract the complexity of working directly with APIs, opening doors for non-developers to leverage the power of AI.

Understanding AI wrappers

At their core, AI Wrappers streamline a four-step process:

- 1** User input: Users provide data (text, images, documents, etc.) through a front-end interface
- 2** API request: The Wrapper processes this data, formats it correctly, and sends it to the AI model
- 3** Model Response: The AI model processes the request and returns a response
- 4** User Output: The Wrapper formats the AI's response into a user-friendly format

This approach removes the developer bottleneck, freeing up technical teams for more complex projects while empowering others to build AI-powered solutions.

Two key tools: n8n and Hyperspace

Two prominent tools exemplify the power of AI Wrappers: n8n and Hyperspace:

n8n: Workflow Automation Powerhouse

n8n is a workflow automation tool that enables the integration of AI services into processes without requiring extensive coding knowledge. Its visual interface is intuitive and the possibilities extensive. Here's how it works:

- **Workflow Design:** n8n offers a drag-and-drop interface to design workflows by connecting nodes. Each node represents an action—triggering an event, making an API call, or processing data

- **AI Integration:** Native support for OpenAI, Claude.ai, and Stability AI enables easy integration of text generation, image recognition, sentiment analysis and much more

- **Customisation:** The "If" and "Split Out" core nodes enable you to add conditional logic, while JavaScript/Python code can be integrated for intricate data manipulation

An easy example anyone can try: Create a custom chatbot by connecting an "AI Agent" node to OpenAI. A user's message triggers the workflow, the AI processes it, and a response is returned in real time. Give it a go, you'll be impressed with yourself!

Hyperspace: a centralised AI powerhouse

Hyperspace simplifies access to a vast array of AI technologies by consolidating them into a single platform. It offers a centralized catalogue of over 1,000 AI tools (GPT-4, Midjourney, etc.).

- **Centralised access:** The catalogue of over 1,000 AI tools can be selected for tasks like content creation, image generation and personal assistance.

- **Pre-built capabilities:** Pre-configured models cater to specific use cases, from seemingly complex tasks like brainstorming, to simple-but useful ones like grammar correction or SEO optimisation.

- **Ease of use:** The intuitive interface enables non-developers to integrate advanced AI functionalities into their workflows or apps, removing the need for deep technical expertise

Building Apps with AI Wrappers: A Step-by-Step Guide

- 1** Define your app idea: Identify the problem you want to solve –

summarizing PDFs, generating images, translating content, etc. Then, select the AI models that align with the required functionality.

- 2** Build the Workflow (n8n): Utilize n8n's visual editor to design your workflow. Add nodes for triggers (user input), API calls (OpenAI), and output formatting. Rigorously test and debug the workflow to ensure smooth data flow.

- 3** Integrate a front-end (Optional): For an enhanced user experience, connect your n8n workflow to a custom front-end (eg Streamlit or React). Incorporate authentication and payment systems if you intend to monetise the application.

- 4** Leverage pre-built templates (Hyperspace): Accelerate development by utilising Hyperspace's pre-configured models and templates. Tailor these templates to align with your app's specific goals.

- 5** Deployment: Host your app on cloud platforms like AWS or Runpod. For scalability and security, consider containerising workflows with Docker.

Practical applications for publishers

Here are simple examples of how publishers can leverage AI Wrappers to innovate and enhance their operations.

Any B2C magazine publisher can now quickly and easily create a sophisticated content recommendation engine using AI Wrappers. By integrating user behaviour data, reading history and content metadata, the system can generate highly personalised article suggestions for each reader. This application can significantly increase engagement, time spent and in the case of paid subscribers, customer retention.

A nice use-case for, say, a regional newspaper publisher could be to use an AI Wrapper to create an automated local event discovery and coverage tool. A tool like this could be set up to scan social media, local government websites and community forums to identify newsworthy events, helping journalists stay on top of local happenings - and

could then be configured to automatically populate an elegant template that auto-updates a 'What's On' page.

And it's easy to envisage many helpful applications of AI Wrappers for B2B publishers too. Any one fancy developing an AI-powered industry trend analyser?

A well-prompted AI wrapper could easily analyse vast amounts of industry data to identify emerging trends, potential

market disruptions and business opportunities. This high-value offering can become a crucial resource for subscribers, enhancing the publisher's reputation as an industry leader.

Health warning

Ethical considerations are, of course, paramount with AI. All media should

be transparent with audiences about the use of AI in products, ensure that data is handled responsibly and that AI-generated content is properly reviewed and validated. AI Wrappers are democratising access to AI for publishers of all sizes. By embracing tools like n8n and Hyperspace, publishers can unlock new levels of workflow efficiency and build innovative products that resonate with the audience.

How 'Causal AI' can be a game-changer

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 13 February 2025

Causal AI' might not be making as many headlines as Generative or Agentic AI, but it's a class of artificial intelligence that media businesses - both B2C and B2B - shouldn't overlook. Its unique ability to go beyond correlation and reveal true cause-and-effect relationships makes it an invaluable tool in a world where data-driven decisions are paramount.

For media companies grappling with the challenges of audience retention, pricing optimisation and campaign performance, Causal AI provides actionable insights that can guide better strategies. Though less flashy than its better-known AI counterparts, Causal AI offers something equally important: clarity about the drivers behind business outcomes and the confidence to act on them.

I want to explore how media owners can harness this emerging technology to their advantage. Even if you haven't yet heard much about Causal AI, now is a good time to lean in...[according to recent research by BusinessWire](#) the global Causal AI market is projected to grow eightfold in the next 5 years, from \$56.2mn in 2024 to \$456.8mn by 2030; a CAGR of 41.8%.

Why such high growth projections?

The rise of Causal AI is driven by several key factors. Firstly, there is growing scepticism and anxiety about the opaque and stochastic nature of Gen AI - the so-called black box problem. In particular, there is increasing demand for explainable AI in regulated industries. Sectors like healthcare and finance are two of the more obvious ones where transparent, interpretable models are required in order to meet ethical and compliance standards. But also consider email marketing, which is widely used as a content distribution channel by publishers; across Europe, it is subject to GDPR, meaning that consent and data privacy must be respected. It is aspects of business like these that are leading to greater demand for robust counterfactual analysis when it comes to using AI.

What is Causal AI?

AI approaches often fall short when it comes to answering the most critical questions: Why did this happen? and What should we do next?

These limitations stem from the fact that conventional AI primarily identifies correlations rather than uncovering true cause-and-effect relationships. Enter Causal AI - a potentially transformative class of AI that bridges this gap by focusing on causation, enabling businesses to make more informed and actionable decisions.

Causal AI offers clear explanations for its recommendations, fostering trust and accountability. For example, in publishing, Causal AI could be deployed to help optimise content distribution by analysing the causal drivers behind audience engagement, such as the most effective times, channels and formats for delivering content, ensuring it reaches the right audience at the right moment to maximise its impact and value.

Causal AI has the potential to address some of the key media challenges. Despite advancements in data tools, publishers still hit roadblocks in three major areas:

1 Shallow insights: Traditional analytics often stop at correlations, which can lead to poor decision-making when the real causes aren't really clear.

2 Inefficient decision-making: Without tools to uncover causal relationships, publishers risk wasting time and money on strategies that simply don't work.

3 Advertiser demands: Brands now expect more transparency and measurable ROI, something traditional methods often struggle to deliver.

Causal AI can help publishers address these issues by offering insights that are both predictive and prescriptive, paving the way for sharper, data-driven strategies.

Could Causal AI also be used to create revenue?

There are a number of ways publishers could leverage Causal AI to drive revenue: by moving beyond surface-level data and exploring the "why" behind audience behaviours, it could help publishers refine their strategies and unlock growth in innovative ways.

For instance, Causal AI could be used to gain far deeper insights into audience behaviour. Imagine identifying the key factors that influence subscription renewals.

It could also prove valuable for optimising advertising strategies. A regional newspaper, for example, could use Causal AI to analyse which content categories or formats drive the most advertising engagement within specific demographics. This level of insight could allow publishers to offer more precise and impactful advertising solutions

And when it comes to content strategy, Causal AI could help editorial teams make more informed decisions. By analysing how different headline styles or publishing times affect reader engagement, publishers will be able to fine-tune their content distribution strategies and better meet audience expectations.

Additionally, Causal AI could assist with scenario testing for strategic decisions. Whether it's assessing the potential impact of pricing changes or predicting the outcomes of a new product launch, this technology might help publishers

explore various options before committing to a particular course of action.

While still emerging, Causal AI holds significant promise for helping publishers turn insights into actionable strategies that could lead to measurable results and fresh revenue opportunities.

The Financial Services sector has already begun to embrace Causal AI to drive business efficiency. Banks like HSBC and Citibank are using causal models to pinpoint why customers leave, letting them create targeted strategies to keep those clients before they reach the point of no return. Causal AI tools are also widely used in the financial services sector to evaluate credit risk strategies, cutting down on defaults and improving loan approvals.

Publishers can learn a lot from these examples, applying similar techniques to audience segmentation, subscription management and ad performance. The result? Tailored solutions that not only meet client needs but also deliver measurable results.

Steps for publishers to embrace Causal AI

1 Build a data-ready infrastructure - Make sure your datasets are clean, well-organised, and easy to analyse. A little investment here goes a long way.

2 Collaborate with causal AI providers - Platforms like [Ergodic](#), [CausaLens](#), and [Actable AI](#) are making causal tools more accessible. Partnering with them can help you hit the ground running. Ergodic has a fantastic free tool called Halley that you can trial to give you an idea of how you can apply Causal AI in your business.

3 Train your teams - Equip your editorial, marketing and data teams with the skills to use causal AI effectively. Upskilling your staff ensures they'll get the most out of these tools.

4 Run pilot projects - Start small. Test Causal AI on a specific challenge, like analysing subscriber behavior or improving ad placement, and use the results to refine your approach.

5 Develop revenue-generating services - Turn causal insights into products. Package them as premium services for advertisers, brands, and SMEs.

6 Overcoming ethical and practical barriers - As with any AI technology, adopting causal AI comes with its own set of challenges that publishers must navigate. Transparency is a critical concern; it's essential to ensure that clients clearly understand how insights are generated, as building trust is fundamental to long-term success. Data privacy is another key issue, requiring strict compliance with regulations like GDPR to safeguard audience data and maintain ethical standards. Additionally, the complexity of causal AI tools and workflows needs to be addressed. Simplifying these systems is crucial so that non-technical users can effectively apply causal insights without being overwhelmed by technical barriers. By tackling these issues head-on, publishers can build confidence in causal AI while reaping its rewards.

7 Start now

8 Causal AI can be another useful tool in publishers' armoury to help them get the best out of their business and identify growth opportunities. By uncovering the "why" behind audience behaviours and advertiser outcomes, it allows legacy publishers to offer unparalleled insights and transparency. Causal AI brings the opportunity to unlock new revenue streams and will help media keep abreast of another important arm of AI tooling for business.



Why we must act fast but tread carefully

By Paul Hood

● FLASHES & FLAMES 30 January 2025

Are we in the twilight of traditional journalism? Or are we entering a brave new dawn of creativity and accessibility?

Perhaps both.

We're certainly at a crossroads, grappling with the integration of Artificial Intelligence into the very fabric of our media landscape. Don't we know it!

As we navigate the uncharted terrain of AI in journalism, we're at a critical juncture. Let's call it "The AI dilemma: Publishers' urgent need to innovate vs. the imperative to protect."

Let's explore the complex challenges that news organizations face as they strive to harness the transformative power of AI while safeguarding the fundamental principles of journalism and public trust.

While the potential for AI to revolutionise various aspects of journalism is undeniable, the paramount importance of exercising caution in its integration is obvious too.

We will delve into the key inherent risks associated with AI implementation in news media, including privacy concerns, algorithmic bias and the challenges of explainability. We will also explore strategic approaches and mitigation strategies that can help publishers navigate this complex landscape, balancing the imperative to innovate with the ethical responsibility to protect journalistic integrity and public trust.

The fact is that, on the surface, the potential for AI to curate personalised news experiences can be a boon for user engagement. But the essential question of these tempting possibilities is: whether we are creating a more informed citizenry or are merely fragmenting our shared reality

into a myriad of individualised information bubbles? The promise of efficiency and engagement must be weighed against the risk of eroding the common narrative that binds society together.

The inherent risks of AI

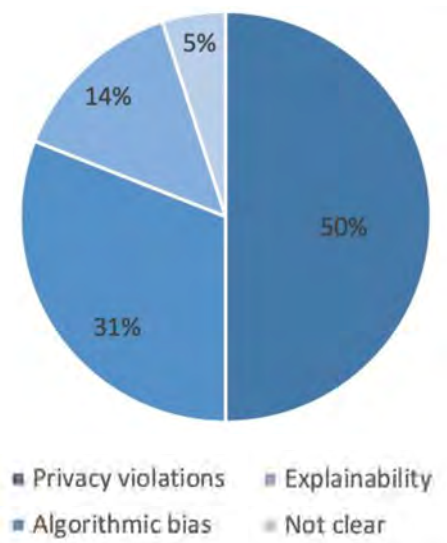
In assessing AI systems for adoption and deployment, media executives should - first and foremost understand the most common nature of AI failures.

A recent study by Matthias Holweg, Rupert Younger and Yuni Wen, for [California Management Review](#) analysed 106 cases involving AI controversy, identifying the root causes of concern and reputational issues that arose. They found that privacy and algorithmic bias emerged as the predominant issues. These two categories account for more than four-fifths of all recorded failures, highlighting a critical area of concern in AI implementation.

The root causes of concern from AI controversies

Let's take a closer look at the top three, and see what they might teach us to look out for in the business of news media.

In this study, the most prevalent reputational risk associated with AI implementation stems from privacy intrusions which accounted for half of the observed cases. Data creep and scope creep are two temptations publishers must avoid in relation to privacy. Data creep can occur where there is a commercial imperative; the temptation is to acquire and use all available data about readers or viewers, regardless of whether explicit



consent has been obtained. Equally, scope creep is easy to envisage; it occurs when companies repurpose data for uses beyond the original intent, such as using subscription information for targeted advertising or content recommendation. In both scenarios, news organisations risk violating audience privacy rights. As news media organisations continue to integrate AI into various aspects of news gathering, production, and distribution, addressing privacy issues becomes not just a legal necessity, but a moral imperative central to maintaining journalistic integrity and public trust.

The second most prevalent reputational risk associated with AI implementation in news media is algorithmic bias, accounting for approximately thirty percent of observed cases. In the context of news media, algorithmic bias can have far-reaching consequences. It may influence content recommendations, potentially creating echo chambers or limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. More critically, it could affect editorial decisions, story assignments, or even the framing of news narratives, inadvertently

perpetuating societal stereotypes or underrepresenting certain communities.

Third, explainability (or the so-called ‘black box’ dilemma) is the other significant cause of AI failure. This relates to the inscrutability of AI algorithms; the challenge of explainability. AI systems tend to be stochastic by nature, meaning that they incorporate elements of randomness and uncertainty in their processes and outputs. Unlike deterministic systems that produce the same output for a given input, stochastic AI systems generate varied results even with identical inputs, introducing adaptability and robustness to their decision-making processes.

This inherent randomness poses a fundamental challenge to the principles of journalistic transparency. As these systems become more complex, our ability to explain their decision-making processes diminishes. This opacity could undermine the very foundation of trust upon which journalism is built. How can we maintain our commitment to transparency when the tools we use operate in ways that defy simple explanation?

As the media landscape evolves with AI integration, maintaining a balance between leveraging technology for improved news delivery and respecting audience privacy rights, correcting inherent AI bias, and ensuring transparency become increasingly critical challenges. The ability to navigate this balance will likely become a key differentiator for news organizations,

influencing their reputation, trustworthiness, and long-term sustainability in an increasingly privacy-conscious world.

A course through uncharted waters

In the face of these challenges, how do we proceed? The path forward requires a delicate balance of embracing innovation while safeguarding the core values of journalism.

1 Transparency as a guiding principle: In an age where the line between human and machine-generated content blurs, transparency becomes more critical than ever. We must be unflinchingly honest with our audience about the role AI plays in our newsgathering and dissemination processes.

2 An Ethical AI framework as our North Star: We must develop a robust ethical framework that guides our use of AI, one that places human values and journalistic integrity at its core. This framework should be a living document, evolving as we gain new insights into the implications of AI for journalism.

3 Cultivating AI literacy: Just as the printing press revolutionised information dissemination, AI is reshaping how we process and distribute news. It’s imperative that journalists and readers alike develop a nuanced understanding of AI’s capabilities and limitations. Only through this increasing literacy can we

hope to harness AI’s potential while guarding against its pitfalls.

4 Human judgment as the final arbiter: While AI can augment our capabilities, it should never supplant human judgment in matters of editorial decision-making. The nuanced understanding of context, ethics, and societal impact that humans bring to journalism must remain at the forefront. Of course.

5 Continuous reflection and adaptation: As we navigate this new landscape, we must remain vigilant and self-reflective. Regular audits of our AI systems and their impact on our journalism and society at large are not just advisable; they are essential.

In conclusion, a successful future for the business of news media depends on our ability to judiciously integrate AI while preserving the irreplaceable human touch in journalism. If we can achieve that, we can ensure that AI serves as a powerful ally in our mission to inform, enlighten, and empower our audiences, as well as creating a sustainable business for legacy media brands. In the words of Walter Lippmann, “The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision.” In the age of AI, our task is to ensure that this searchlight becomes even more precise and far-reaching, while never losing sight of the human stories at the heart of journalism.

How to decide who (or what) decides

By Colin Morrison

● FLASHES & FLAMES 27 June 2024

For those companies wondering not how important AI will be (too late now) but how best to organise in order to maximise the benefit, this is a book*

for us. It’s written for business leaders whose job is (of course) to decide who or what decides. It answers the most obvious questions of how (and why) an organisation would and could

delegate decisions to AI and explores the consequences of doing so. More than the two previous books on the subject I have tried to read, it makes sense of the trade-offs between the decisions of AI

and of humans. It does this with a host of compelling, mini case studies showing how AI can create opportunities that were unimaginable before we all started talking about it.

But there's more.

I must declare an interest because the author of this well-explained, digestible (and mere 150-page tome) is Tim Trumper. He's a publisher-turned-data-specialist with whom I previously collaborated on some of Australia's largest magazines and web sites. That

may be why I can see the publisher's deft hand in his easy-to-read, jargon-free chapters on how companies might be best organised to make the most of AI - all with concise summaries. Today, the author is chair of Australia's NRMA (cf the Automobile Association) and also adviser to Quantium, the 22-year-old Sydney-based company that is now a world-leader in data science and AI.

Trumper concludes that most organisations (let alone media) are likely to have a unique proprietary data set that can be strategically enhanced to

create invaluable insights and predictive capability. But there are plenty more calls to action.

I strongly recommend this book not as a biblical work without which your company can't navigate these dangerously exciting technologies but as a primer to immerse executives in the subject. It will appetise or tantalise even the most tech-tied people. Way to start.

["AI: Game On", by Tim Trumper.](#)

Published by Hardie Grant Books (Melbourne, Australia). 2024.

'How I do it', with Jed White, Andi AI search

By Colin Morrison

● FLASHES & FLAMES 2 April 2024

Former tech journalist Jed (Jeremy) White is co-founder of Andi, self-described as "the next generation of search using the power of AI". Others have called it a mashup between Google and chat-emulating challengers like ChatGPT. White dropped out of the University of Sydney, in Australia, to become a journalist. Soon after he should have been graduating in English and computer science, he became the endlessly inventive editor of Australian Personal Computer, the magazine he had been reading since schooldays. Even in the last years of the 20th century, before the explosion of the web, he pioneered the simultaneous publishing of content in print and online. But he always wanted to be a tech entrepreneur.

After some startup struggles in Australia, White decamped to the US. With co-founder Angela Hoover, he has secured the support of Y Combinator (YC) in San Francisco, the 19-year-old tech startup accelerator and venture funder whose 5,000 startups have included Airbnb, Stripe, Reddit and Dropbox. Andi has so

far fundraised \$2.5mn including \$500k from YC. The co-founders own some 70% of the shares, although this will be subject to dilution by existing share pledges and future funding. YC has its standard initial 7% shareholding but this too will be subject to increases as the company fundraises. In a nod to the egregiously over-funded failures of BuzzFeed, Vice and others, the YC dictum is: "too much money will kill you". It urges startups to stay lean and raise only the minimum they need.

The three-year-old Andi's most recent valuation is believed to be some \$50mn. But the potential for valuation - as well as for competition - may be gauged by the fact that the four-year-old You. Com (in which Salesforce founder Marc Benioff is an investor) has raised \$45mn and has an estimated valuation of \$215mn. The 20-month-old Perplexity (backed by Jeff Bezos) is rumoured to be valued at \$1bn in a current fundraising - doubled in just four months on the back of claimed growth to more than 10mn active users. Buckle up.



"Y Combinator says startups are like chewing glass, and learning to like the taste of your own blood"

What were your earliest ambitions?

When I was a kid, we lived in a little town called Bli Bli on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, a land of sugar cane fields and beaches. I was always more interested in silicon than sand. Thanks to my Dad, I became obsessed with computers early, and started programming when I was eight. By the time I was 12, I was selling computer games I'd written on floppy disks at hobby meetups. I was addicted to Australian Personal Computer magazine (APC - now the longest-running

computer magazine in the world, and published by Future). I inhaled each issue when it came out. Instead of The Clash or Joy Division, I had a poster pinned to my teenage wall of Silicon Valley, marked out with the names of startups stretching up the Bay Area, from San Jose to San Francisco. Some names are icons now, like Apple, with a big pin in Cupertino. Most are long gone. I was hooked. I wanted to build tech startups.

How did you get into media?

I've always had a dual love for media as well as tech. I was editor of my high school magazine, wrote for street media and tech publications freelance (well, just free really), and studied English and Computer Science at the University of Sydney, where I was an editor and then Director of Student Publications. I computerized the student council with desktop publishing, and connected them to the Internet for the first time, before there was a Web.

I spent very little time on studies. I paid my way through uni working four part-time jobs, including doing IT admin every night. I wrote code for my startup idea. And I wrote as much as I could for the student publications. I was also acting president of the student council. I did everything but go to class.

When I was offered a journalism cadetship at Computer Publications, I jumped. It published Australian Personal Computer magazine, and had just been bought from the founder Sean Howard by the late Kerry Packer's ACP Magazines (then Australia's biggest publisher).

I loved APC. The idea of working on it was thrilling. I had planned to drop out of uni to do a startup like my heroes Gates and Jobs. But, instead, I dropped out to work on computer mags.

How was your journalistic career?

I didn't plan to stay at a big company for long. Startups were the goal. But I loved Australian Personal Computer and magazines, and I thought it would be useful to learn how big media companies work. I was about to learn a first lesson about the counter-intuitiveness of startups: You don't learn anything about startups from big companies.

When I started on PC Week, it hadn't yet been tamed by ACP Magazines. They'd recently been moved into an almost hidden corner on Level 6 of Packer's 54 Park Street, central Sydney office building. Luckily for me, our unit was a bit of a law unto itself and still had a scrappy startup vibe, quite separate from the big-selling women's magazines that dominated the mighty ACP. My first desk was a packing crate. I had a kitchen chair. I had to borrow a computer to write on from a PC company. My clever and gentle and (to me) quietly terrifying editor chain smoked in the office. I loved it.

I could write. I knew tech. I loved magazines. But my plan was a startup. Mike Udabage, the managing director brought in to tame the computer mags was a 20-year ACP veteran who convinced me to stay. At the age of 23, I became Editor of APC, the magazine I'd been reading since I was 12.

Udabage saw something promising in the wild bunch of tech cowboys and girls on level 6 and, rather than taming us, he gave us enough cover with ACP management to create an "intrapreneurial" new media skunkworks, and evangelized and took the heat for us on costs with senior management.

We went all-in on the Internet early and became one of the first magazines on the web. I wrote content management systems and coded websites and search engines. We built wildly popular user forums. And we launched a tripartite model where the magazine was equal parts print, web and cover-mounted CDs. We saw that the era of licensing international content was over with the web: we built local testing labs and switched to 100% local Australian content. We tripled paid print circulation, sold record ads, and launched a fleet of online titles, eventually gaining more than 3mn users. We started helping the other magazines in ACP to move online. We even sent over a young journo as a Silicon Valley Correspondent to cover startups in detail.

But, all the while, startups called.

I'd been appointed Publishing Director of a new group called ACP Tech, but I

couldn't resist the call any longer. In the meantime, ACP had become part of PBL, a public company across TV as well as magazines. But it memorably divested its online rights to the Ninemsn joint venture with Microsoft, which was then spun-off into the listed company Ecorp. It was the first dotcom boom and the spin-off made another fortune for the Packer family - but essentially killed the publishing business's online future. (As was also lamented by another young ACP Magazines editor of the time, [Mia Freedman](#), of Cosmopolitan.)

What was your startup journey?

Startups are hard. The world's most successful startup investor and accelerator, Y Combinator (YC) - which has backed a portfolio of startups worth more than US\$600bn including household names like Airbnb, Doordash, Coinbase and more - says that startups are like "chewing glass, and learning to like the taste of your own blood".

They also say that if you knew how hard startups were, you would never start one. They also have the insight that startups are counter-intuitive. All the regular rules of business that you learn in college or in a large business do not work when you're launching a business that scales from two coders in a dorm room to a trillion dollar company in 10 years.

I did not know. I did not have Y Combinator to learn from. I had to learn the hard way.

Australia now has successful startups that have blazed the trail, like Canva and Atlassian. That has helped to start a change in the culture. People grow startups better now. And it created some venture capital and startup infrastructure in the country. These things did not exist when I left ACP and started a startup. I had no savings, no funding, and no idea.

Startups are critical to Australia's future. We can't go on forever digging things out of the ground and flogging them overseas with minimal value-add as the lucky country blessed by natural resources. Australia has a well-educated, technically-literate population and decent infrastructure. But, culturally, it struggles with innovation and risk. And startups

are high risk. Most fail. One in 100 really work. The one pays for the 100 many times over. My friends at ACP Magazines told me I had rocks in my head.

I tried building what would now be called a Media B2B SaaS business - essentially software and machine learning for media businesses. It endured the ultimate startup failure - where a software startup turns into a zombie client services business. You start charging for performing custom services work rather than selling a pure software product.

We broke all of YC's cardinal rules without even knowing them. Never do services or custom paid work because attention goes to where the money comes from. Tick. Focus on just one thing rather than lots of projects. Tick. Hire too fast rather than stay lean. Tick. Do fake work (like conferences or speaking) rather than just write code and talking to users. Tick. Company building rather than product building. Tick. Marketing before product market fit. Tick. Tick. Tick.

At the same time, Google and Facebook between them have laid waste to the media industry's economic model, taking more than 90% of all digital ad revenue and leaving publishers with the scraps. I watched as our media industry clients shrivelled or went into liquidation (with huge unpaid bills), my journalist friends all lost their jobs and "content marketing" took over.

I started reading Paul Graham's essays on Startups around 2006. He was a computer scientist and programmer who created the first SaaS startup Viaweb, which he sold to Yahoo. He used the funds to start Y Combinator as an experiment in angel investing. The very first batch, incidentally, included Reddit which was bought by Condé Nast and IPO'd just last month.

I realized I had to get to the US. It's obvious today that YC has deep insights into what it takes to scale startups, after backing more than 4,000 founders and a string of IPOs. But I went to the wrong place (Colorado rather than the San Francisco Bay Area). And the startup network I engaged with was old school rather than YC. I also continued the

same mistake of trying to bootstrap, continually returning to doing services work to pay the bills. The result was two more zombie startups with interesting AI and search tech, but no path to product market fit - the YC startup term for when customers are begging for what you're making.

By the end of 2018, I was able to put together enough cash to leave most of the client work behind, live off ramen, and focus nearly 100% on code. I started building Orac, a content quality ranking and topic detection AI. Orac was able to detect good and bad content - including content marketing spam, misinformation, hate speech and clickbait.

I spent most of my time in Silicon Valley, and attended YC's Startup School, which is a feeder for its investment program. It was transformational. With encouragement from YC, I launched an early alpha of Orac and got great feedback. I didn't have product market fit, and didn't know exactly what it could be used for. But the AI models were clearly powerful and there was something there.

How did Andi come about?

Andi happened by serendipity. I met my co-founder Angela Hoover at Denver airport. We talked about what it would take to build a new type of search engine. Angela had just returned to the US from a year in Australia where she had worked with Microsoft on Azure. She had the idea for a search engine for Gen-Z with a messaging interface and a visual feed like Instagram or TikTok. Gen-Z hates Google because it's old and overwhelmed with SEO spam and advertising. Gen-Z spend their lives on their phones in messaging apps.

We realized that AI and the models I'd been coding offered a new way to build a search engine that was based on understanding content and the quality of sources, rather than on page rank signals that could be easily gamed by spammers with backlinks and keyword stuffing. We built an initial "minimal viable product" and took Andi (then called LazyWeb) through YC's Startup School program. Angela won the pitch comp, and we did office hours in front of the entire Startup School community with YC Group

Partner Jared Friedman. We kept them updated, and based on fast progress and enthusiastic engagement from early users, applied and were accepted into YC for their Winter 2022 batch.

YC is incredibly competitive, with more than 40k applications a year from startups, and an acceptance rate of around 1% - lower than Harvard or Stanford. They invest \$500k, and put startups through an intensive three-month program that culminates in Demo Day which acts like an auction to maximize fundraising from Silicon Valley investors. They then mentor and support the company directly through all its stages to IPO and beyond.

Google is an ad tech company with a browser distribution monopoly. It steals content with minimal attribution, competes for advertisers, promotes low-quality content farms ahead of high quality media, and holds publishers to ransom. AI makes this worse.

Our mission with Andi is to un-break the Internet, fight spam and ad tech, and create a new economic model for search that heavily promotes sources and shares search revenue with publishers.

How's it going?

Andi is still pre-product market fit, but we've definitely made something people love. We hit 1mn users for the first time in December, and use is growing at around 30% a month, purely by word of mouth with no paid marketing.

Our user base is technical Gen-Z - 46% under 25 years old (70% under 35). They're highly educated (19% postgrad), high income (20%), 69% male and 94% highly technical. More than 88% are on mobile. Like computer magazine readers, these are the people other people turn to for tech advice and help. They're also the smart users who give us great feedback to keep Andi improving, and who evangelize us - so we're spending our early funds on building rather than marketing.

With YC's backing, we've raised \$2.5mn in venture capital funding from high profile investors like Goodwater Capital, Gaingels, K20 Fund and Acacia, as well as prominent angels. We're blessed to have

some early investors and advisors from the Australian media, including some of my former bosses at PBL/ACP: Nick Chan (now COO of Andi), Tim Trumper, David Gyngell and Peter Zavec.

We've been covered by the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Fortune, Bloomberg, TechCrunch, Fast Company and more. And, as CEO, Angela has spoken at the White House, and in the US Congress and Senate.

What's so special about Andi?

Andi was the first search engine to use a conversational interface with AI summaries and answers, connecting AI to the Internet. But it has more than a chat UX - showing search results in a rich visual feed like Instagram or TikTok, with full branding promoting the sources. Instead of a list of blue links with truncated web text snippets from publishers, Andi gives you answers and quotes, while also letting users go deeper to explore the rich variety of great sources online.

Our competitors are 1st generation ad tech-based search like Google, full of spam and sponsored results. And 2nd generation AI answer bots like ChatGPT and Perplexity, that are "good until you use it", rife with wrong answers, and which hide or make-up sources.

What's your vision?

The big problem with AI and large language models (LLMs) is that they "lie like truth" - they're not only wrong, but they are convincingly wrong. They make up facts. They make up sources. 94% of AI answers from chatbots like ChatGPT contain information that is inaccurate, misleading or incomplete. And they make it cheap and easy to produce misinformation - 40mn+ items of AI spam are being posted to the Internet a day. There is a tidal wave of AI rubbish coming. And 56% of people say they do not think they can identify when an AI is lying to them.

We are obsessively focused on accuracy and content quality - finding high-quality material from the best sources and publishers, identifying accurate information and answers fast, and heavily promoting interesting sources.

To do this, we're building a content engine (named Trantor) that deeply understands content and sources using AI. This is how we can build a much better type of search engine that helps users to "find and explore the best of what the web has to offer", as Search Engine Journal put it.

What's the business model?

We plan a freemium model where searching anonymously will always be free - but without ads or tracking. We will offer paid plans with premium features, such as the ability to connect to your personal data (like email and documents) for search, question answering and text generation, or access to premium content through partnerships.

Our goal at the moment is to keep working on nailing factual accuracy and speed, and improving Andi's AI models and content understanding week after week. We will keep iterating based on user feedback. We're not there yet, but we have some very strong indicators that we're approaching it - including high user scores and strong retention among "activated" users (people who use Andi for at least a week and do at least 30 searches).

The real test will be trying paid plans to see if we've built something people will pay for; we will test that soon.

YC describes product market fit as being like pushing a boulder up a hill. You can't see in front of you, and you have to just keep inching upwards. Once you reach PMF, you're chasing a boulder down the hill. That's when things are taking off like wildfire and your servers are burning down. So the right time to switch to marketing and promotion is when that change happens - so you're pouring fuel on to the fire. We're somewhere on that uphill push right now.

What's it like being a startup in San Francisco?

AI is the next major revolution in tech - as big or bigger than the rise of the PC, the Internet or the smartphone. And San Francisco is the heart of the AI revolution.

We're based in Cerebral Valley (aka Hayes

Valley, described by a local paper as "San Francisco's nerdiest neighborhood"). There is an intense concentration of talent, ideas and energy around AI here that is unlike anything I've ever seen.

Every week you can hop in a self-driving car to get help from a YC group partner, or go to one of the dozens of hackathons and open source community events and co-working sessions on every day. There are a thousand opportunities to connect, learn, engage, and "make luck happen" as a startup. With interested new users. With technology partners. With investors. And with potential recruits who could become part of the Andi family as we grow, and who are excited by the promise of building new tech with AI that can help people and make a real impact.

Which companies do you most admire?

We're in awe of Y Combinator and our group partners there. They have built high-scale startups themselves, are insanely incisive and blunt on the reality of things, while also the warmest and most encouraging people you could ever work with.

We're fans of some of YC's biggest hits, who we've been lucky to learn from. Brian Chesky and the team at Airbnb are inspiring because they are relentlessly resourceful, and absolutely obsessed with making users happy. Coinbase has been inspiring for maintaining focus through ups and downs in the crypto market.

What are the lessons?

I can't take credit for these lessons. They're all YC. If I had a time machine, I would go back to Bli Bli and give myself the YC User Manual which would (more or less) tell me:

1. Make something people want.
2. Write code, talk to users. Repeat.
3. Attention goes to where the money comes from. Don't do services work.
4. Be relentlessly resourceful.
5. Avoid fake work. Stay lean.
6. Startups die by suicide not homicide.
7. Be nice.

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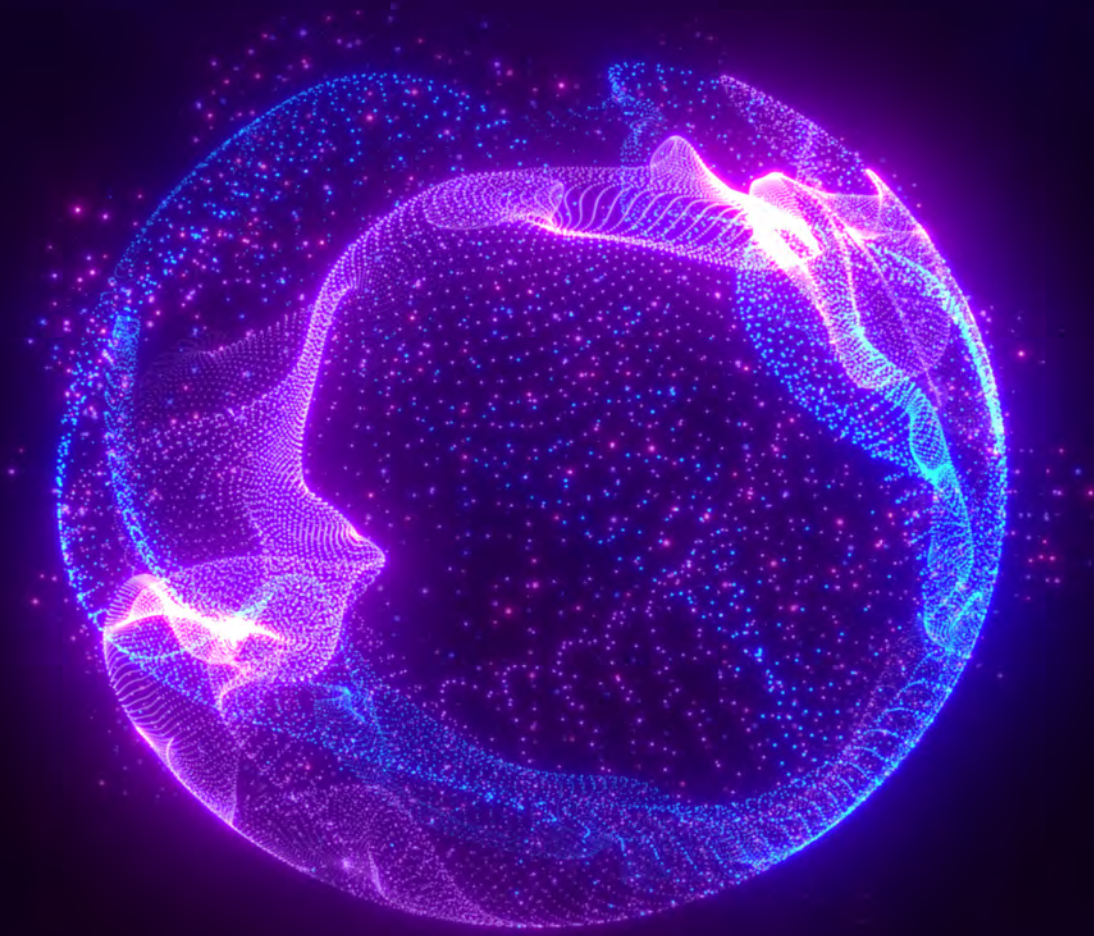
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