Is the Future of Generative AI
Quality or Quantity?

phrasee

Overview

My name's Parry. I'm the co-founder and chief executive of Phrasee, a platform that uses generative AI to create content that's on-brand, safe, and, most importantly, performs. But this guide isn't to talk to you about that Phrasee.

What I'm here to do is talk to you about creativity, and what creativity means in the modern world now that Generative AI has entered the mainstream.

The world is awash with jargon, noise and confusion on this topic. Generative AI, deep learning, transformer models - the list goes on. This isn't helped, of course, by AI "experts" on Twitter who, 6 months ago, were metaverse "experts."

Life comes at you fast.

So this guide is here to help you separate the hype from the reality - in actual human terms.

What do all these technical advancements mean? What does generative AI make possible that was formerly impossible? What problems does generative AI create – and how can you solve them?

Let's talk about it.

Parry Malm

To understand the future, let's first talk about the past

Do you recognize this painting? **You probably do - It's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Vermeer,** one of the Dutch masters. And this is what art was back in the day.

"Girl with a Pearl Earring" by Vermeer

Artists would be patronized to capture moments in time so they would survive throughout history. You've probably been to museums and seen still life bowls of fruit, and this is what art was. Painting and sculpture were the primary forms of art used to capture moments. And artists made their living creating art that captured something in the real world. And this happened for a long, long time, and saved many artists from starving throughout the years.

But then something changed.

The world of art was transformed with the introduction of a groundbreaking technological innovation – photography.

This is one of the first pictures taken in Paris, around 1846. The invention of the camera meant that we no longer needed artists to create paintings to capture a moment in time, because that was suddenly an incredibly inefficient way of doing it.

So immediately then you had artists going, "Oh geez, like this is bad because we need to eat. We can no longer eat by applying the trade that we've been applying for generations. What are we gonna do?"

Some of them probably did starve because they weren't very creative, I guess. And if they weren't willing to adapt to the new reality.

Look to the Artists

But some of them looked into their mind's eye and they embraced the new world. This new era of their profession being disrupted and they embarked upon a new path.

For example, this, you've probably all seen this as well, it's **"Starry Night" by Van Gogh** which hangs in the MoMA in New York. Now obviously this location doesn't exist in real life. There's nowhere in the natural world where you can go and experience this exact image. This is all from the creative imagination of Van Gogh himself.

He could have looked at the invention of the camera, which happened during his lifetime and said, "Well, I guess I'm toast." But he didn't because he's a true creative.

And this is what I've learned about technology through my storied career - when technology comes, you either adapt or die, and you always look to the artist first.

"Starry Night" by Van Gogh

Fast forward
to today

So let's fast forward to 2023. We're in this wild world of generative AI.

Artists, writers, and many creative types – be it within the marketing domain or anywhere – are looking at this new technology going out and they're thinking:

"Well, this is gonna affect my livelihood. I can no longer spend my days doing hyper-creative tasks because this is disrupting me. What am I gonna do?"

And some people will view it like this. They'll see it as the arrival of the camera which means they can no longer apply their trade. Just gonna whittle away and into nothingness.

Some will be existentially challenged by it, and then some will view things differently.

So let's put ourselves in the shoe of Mr. Van Gogh. Would he be looking at things like this in a forlorn manner with the metaphor of the black cats signifying a bad omen crossing his path?

This is a picture you can see at the bottom that I created with Midjourney. Midjourney is a text-to-image AI where you can put in any sort of text and it'll deconstruct it to its concept parts and translate it into a bunch of pixels. Which is pretty crazy.

Now, would Van Gogh be looking at stuff like this thinking, "This is bad luck. I'm gonna need to cut off my other ear and just be kind of sad about life." I mean, maybe. But you always look to artists first, and we're amid this generative AI revolution, which is happening and it's happening quickly.

I've looked at what the artists are doing, and here's one great example.

Midjourney Bot ✔ BOT Today at 19:54
photorealistic image of Van Gogh in front of a Starry Night backdrop. He is wearing typical clothing of an artist in 1800s Paris, he is looking forlorn at the camera, sad in fact, wistful of days gone by. There is a black cat crossing his path, a sign of bad luck to come. - - v5 - Upscaled by @parrymalm (fast)

It's Damien Hurst, one of the young British artists who rose to prominence in the Nineties. He caught onto the idea of generative AI coming into the world at a fervent pace. He's got this series of paintings called Spin Paintings.

He teamed up with data scientists and created an algorithm that is based upon a number of inputs – some random, some human driven – and it generates one of these beautiful paintings.

And then you click the "buy now" button.
He prints it out, signs it, and you are $6,000 poorer.

The artists are already there.

Parry Malm • You
CEO @ Phrasee
1w • 🌐

OK – we've done it, everyone! We've hit peak AI hype! Damien Hirst is now minting NFTs of AI-generated spin paintings!

(ngl tho I'm tempted...)

THE BEAUTIFUL PAINTINGS
DAMIEN HIRST

DROP CLOSES IN

Days	Hrs	Mins	Secs
07	22	43	05

Generate Now

The true creatives in the world are embracing this technology and finding ways to make it more creative and ultimately to make it lucrative. I don't think we could describe Damian Hurst as a starving artist these days, even with the advent of generative AI. So, I think if Vincent Van Gogh were still alive today, he wouldn't be the sad guy with the cat. He would be the excited guy embracing this new technology, finding ways to use it to make him even more creative.

An allegory here is about 30 years ago, an AI beat the greatest chess player to ever live, but that didn't kill chess.

Chess is more popular now than ever before. So AI isn't going to kill creativity even any more than it killed chess. In fact, now is the best time in human history to be a true creative.

Here's the reality, the future isn't AI, and despite all the thread boys on Twitter telling you it is, the future is not AI. The future is people using AI. Your opportunity isn't AI. AI is just a tool set. It's not your opportunity whatsoever. Your opportunity is to become Van Gogh 2.0. Let's talk about how.

AI is a toolset

Let's go back to the days of 2014 when the concept of Phrasee was first born. This was long before people were calling stuff Generative AI, but we sensed the opportunity and we started building towards it.

In fact, we even wrote the book on it, "The Language Effect."

Being a marketer in today's world is very, very challenging. Cutting through the noise and cutting through the hype and understanding what is going on in the world around us.

My goal is to help walk you through a few home truths about what is happening, what is not happening, and then ultimately what your challenge is gonna be moving forward to morph into the Van Gogh of the marketing world.

Parry Malm

The
Language
Effect

Why AI-Powered Copywriting
is a marketer's (new) best friend

"It's the right time for global brands to embrace an AI-powered future. In the world of marketing, language is the natural next step. Exciting, advancing times for marketers."
Jai Kotecha, Managing Partner, Ogilvy

What's actually happening

We've all heard about the rapid innovation of AI tools of, like, you see this graph.

It outlines the adoption of ChatGPT versus other well-known consumer-facing platforms. And it's wild.

In early January, I was at the barber. I was getting a haircut and the guy in the chair next to me is talking to his barber about ChatGPT. After eight and a half years of stewarding Phrasee, my mother finally understands what I do for a living.

ChatGPT Sprints to One Million Users

Time it took for selected online services to reach one million users

	Launched	
Netflix	1999	3.5 years
Kickstarter*	2009	2.5 years
Aribnb*	2008	2.5 years
Twitter	2006	2 years
Foursquare***	2009	13 months
Facebook	2004	10 months
Dropbox	2008	7 months
Spotify	2008	5 months
Instagram***	2010	2.5 months
ChatGPT	2022	5 days

*one million backers   **one million nights booked   ***one million downloads
Source: Company announcements via Business Insider/Linkedin

The last six months have been absolutely crazy and, and I'm sure you're feeling it where everybody suddenly, is talking about AI and ChatGPT and Midjourney and all of these various things.

Naturally, things can get trendy. Experts in the metaverse are now AI experts, but we shouldn't forget their previous expertise in vaccines. Let's not forget that these people are absolutely talented.

And suddenly they've got 24 years of AI expertise all packed within the last six months. It's really incredible. This is what happens with every trend. You've got a lot of people who notice the gold rush and they're selling pickaxes and gold pans.

This noise makes it even more challenging because you cannot go on LinkedIn or Twitter these days without someone saying: "98% of you are using ChatGPT wrong. Here are 14 tips on how you can be an expert."

All it's doing is creating noise. So here is what is actually happening.

The Blank Page Problem is no more

THIS IS A THOUSAND MONKEYS WORKING AT A THOUSAND TYPEWRITERS.

For a long time, the main constraint that people faced was the ability to produce content. Now this is of course an image from an episode of The Simpsons but it is a display of what is a real statistical theorem called the Infinite Monkey Theorem.

It states that a monkey hitting keys at random on a typewriter keyboard for an infinite amount of time will almost surely type any given text, including the complete works of William Shakespeare.

For years, for my entire career, for your entire career, the core cognitive burden that you faced was that of creation. You would look at the screen, at the flashing cursor, and with every single flash it would go deeper into your soul – "what should I write?" You would be stuck looking at the blank page with this big problem of creation.

That problem no longer exists for the rest of the existence of humanity.

We should no longer be stuck on a blank page. Now the ability to create has been completely democratized.

Anybody can use one of a litany of AI tools, they can click a button and boom, there's a whole bunch of content right there for you. But just because it's written doesn't make it good.

Now that there's this huge deluge of content, your cognitive burden has shifted from that of creation to that of curation.

What does this mean? It means that you no longer need to worry about creating stuff. You can click a button and it can be created. **But is what you created good?**

And good can mean a few things:

01.

Is it factually accurate?

Has it manufactured facts? Is it trustworthy? That's important.

02.

Does it have the intent which you want it to?

If you're saying you want it to jump, does it just sit down?

03.

Is it on brand?

Does it adhere to your style, to your tone of voice? Does it do all these things that you've spent so much time and effort building up?

04.

Does it perform?

Does it actually make people take the action you want them to take?

Because that's the whole purpose of language within the marketing realm. Now, this is a big problem because you can go into any AI and you can click the button and you can create something. And it's coherent. And at first glance it looks really cool and you can pat yourself on the back for using a good prompt.

But just because it's done doesn't mean it's good. Now, you might be thinking, "that might be true for the majority of people in the world, but I know what's good. I've got this sixth sense about what's good and what's bad."

And maybe you're right, but maybe you're not. So let's put it to the test. What I'm showing you right now is data from a large card issuer we work with in the US. They were sending out an email campaign to get people to sign up for a new credit card. It was a rewards credit card with a $0 annual fee.

01. Limited-timer offer: Apply for your no-annual-fee rewards credit card today!

02. 💳 Earn rewards points & save with our $0 annual fee credit card!

03. Start earning points on everyday purchases with our no-fee rewards card! 💰

04. Say goodbye to fees: Discover the benefits of our no-annual-fee rewards card

05. Boost your spending power with our rewards-rich, no annual fee credits card!

06. Don´t miss out: Apply now for a rewards credit card with ZERO fees! 💳

07. Get more bang for your buck: No annual fee + rewards points = 💯 satisfaction!

08. 🌎 💳 Enjoy a world of rewards with our no-annual-fee credit card

09. Make your money work for you: Apply for our no-annual-fee rewards credit card today! 💪

10. Time to upgrade: Experience hassle-free rewards with our no-annual-fee credit card

We segmented the audience into 10 equal and distinct groups and sent one different subject line to each of those groups in a multivariate test.

Try and figure out which one you think got the highest click-through rate.

Everything else in the campaign was completely equal - we controlled all the other variables. The variants were sent out at the exact same time they were sent out to a randomly selected group. The content of the email was the exact same.
The only thing which was different was the subject line here.

The dependent variable is the click-through rates, um, on the links within the body content. Now, once you have a thesis on which one is best, I want you to think about your reasons why.

Because this is what happens in marketing teams throughout the world on a daily basis: You'll have a piece of content, be it for something as simple as a subject line or a billboard, or an article. And people will read it, and they will apply their own bias and their own heuristics, and their own belief systems to it, and their own judgments about what they believe is correct.

Effectively, they're relying upon instinct and gut feeling. Then they'll debate it internally. Each person will put forward a persuasive argument, and then the one which people select is either by the person whose argument was the most persuasive or the person who gets paid the most.

And then the one which they pick is best, and it gets sent out to everybody with no rhyme or reason to it. People, by and large, do not apply a data-based approach to language and this is costing them money. Let me outline how much of a problem it is.

Out of this list, **number three was written by a human copywriter** from the client side. Uh, so that's cool.

So, this list shows that AI can write a bunch of stuff that sounds human and is indecipherable from those written by humans? And that's cool. That's a good party trick. But what actually matters is this is the one which won:

09.

Make your money work for you: Apply for our no-annual-fee rewards card today

+84
click rate uplift

Maybe you got this one right, and good job if you did, but the majority don't when I've run this experiment live. The impact was that number nine had 84% more clicks in the best effort that the human copywriter made.

Now what I'm saying is not that humans are bad at being creative, but I am saying that humans are not good at understanding what is good and what is bad.

The Age of Curation

So now that creation has been democratized and you can create a whole bunch of stuff without effort, you need to then determine what is good and what is bad. And the only repeatable way of doing this is to use a data-driven model. And this is of course what Phrasee does but I'm not gonna shameless plug you.

Obviously, the impact that improved language can have is incomprehensible. Here's a quote from Saul Lopes at Curry's, a UK retailer of consumer electronics.

Saul said that they got a **9% conversion uplift and two and a half million pounds,** so about three and a half million dollars more revenue just by optimizing one piece of language.

currys

"I don't know what marketers are waiting for – one subject line change and I'm achieving a 9% conversion uplift and £2.5m revenue impact."

Saul Lopes – former Head of CRM

View more customer stories

In the end, quality matters more than quantity

If you think through the marketing activities you do across all your various channels, you don't need content. You can click a button and get content.

You no longer have the blank page problem. What you need is high-performing content, and the only way that you can get high-performing content at scale is to apply objective data to the problem.

It's no good just to create anymore. Creation is an absolute commodity, but curation and then learning from that curation is the secret sauce, and that is what is gonna get you ahead in this new reality.

Obviously, the next step is personalization, and finding out how to not just generate content on a one-to-one basis, but optimize it on a one-to-one basis.

You can go in one of two directions right now. You can be sad Van Gogh and you can watch the world pass you by going, "I used to be a contender."
Or you can be confident in Van Gogh, and I urge all of you to be the latter because we all now have access to some incredibly powerful technology, and it's up to you how you use it.

About Phrasee

Phrasee's AI content platform generates, optimizes, and analyzes content for the world's leading brands. Phrasee helps with everything from generating high-performing words and emojis to analyzing the results of the language you use – all within an enterprise-grade platform built for scaling the best AI content.

Book your demo today to see how Phrasee's AI-powered platform can help you and your marketing team find the words that drive more clicks, conversions, and, yes, revenue.

Talk to us today