

AI: The dos and don'ts for marketing content

A practical experiment in writing with AI

Packed with time-saving insights:

AI at work

Ethics

Compliance

Authenticity

Strengths and weaknesses

Transparency

Welcome to our AI laboratory. We've been expecting you...

This ebook is an experiment. It has been written almost entirely with a standard generative AI platform. In line with AI best practice, we want to be absolutely upfront about that.

That said, this introduction is being written entirely by a human being, one of our experienced content editors. It's important for us to be transparent about that as well. We want to use this ebook to demonstrate the benefits and risks of using AI to generate content.

We'll show you how we prompted the AI, and we'll show you how it performed. The good, the bad, and the annoyingly average.

You'll see that, right now, AI for marketing content is still a long way from being a practical mainstream tool. It needs a lot of human intervention. You'll also see that it learns fast and that, for some shorter forms of content, it can be an effective and efficient marketing writer.

The key measure

We'll be looking at the key questions of ethics, integrity and security that surround AI. But we'll begin with the basics. Simply, does it work? Can an email produced by AI outperform something written by a human?

Like AI, the best marketing copywriters have always followed strict, data-driven principles. They flourish because their priority is what works, not what wins awards for creativity. This practical, results-focused approach is also what makes them great prompters and editors of AI.

To become a useful tool, AI needs to learn from and build on the decades of experience and knowledge acquired by professionals in the crafting of effective, responsive marketing copy.

Pushing the limits

In fact, this ebook is asking even more of AI as a marketing writer. An effective email is usually about a single, well-defined topic, and it's aimed at a specific audience. An ebook about a complex subject is more nuanced and needs to have broader appeal, because it will be more widely available than a targeted email.

So we've decided to put AI through its paces with a process that makes the most demands on its capabilities. That way, we can see where it works well, and where it needs more time to improve.

The human factor

One thing to remember throughout this experiment: a human has prompted, edited and refined everything you're reading. We'll probably never be in a position to totally trust AI to do a secure, honest and effective writing job on its own. But, given that human input, it's already proving itself an able and effective partner for marketers, sales teams and business owners looking to grow their businesses and build loyal, responsive audiences.

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A first test: the introduction

You've just read the introduction created by our human writer. Here's the first paragraph from the AI's version.

Editor:
This first response is pretty dull. It makes the common business writing mistake of opening with a generic statement of the obvious. After all, you probably wouldn't be reading this ebook if you didn't think that "...the need for guidance on how to use AI responsibly and effectively in content creation has become critical..."

So I asked the AI to rewrite its introduction...



Prompt:

Write an introduction for an ebook about the dos and don'ts of using AI to generate marketing content. Explain that the ebook is an experiment, using AI to write about using AI. Emphasize the fact that a human is supervising the AI at every step. Highlight some risks about using AI and show where it is already effective. Maximum 500 words.

AI: **Introduction**

The age of AI has arrived, reshaping industries and redefining possibilities, and marketing is no exception. As businesses navigate the complexities of this transformative tool, the need for guidance on how to use AI responsibly and effectively in content creation has become critical. This ebook explores the dos and don'ts of employing AI for marketing content, but with a unique twist—it is itself a product of AI, crafted under the vigilant supervision of a human collaborator.



Prompt:

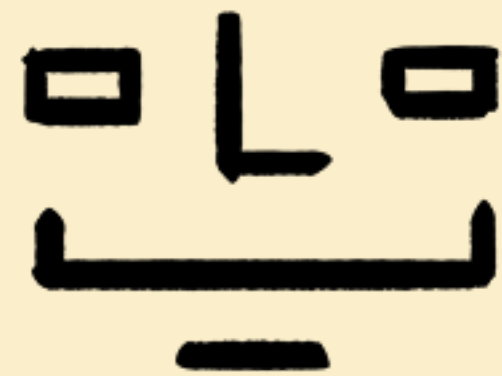
Rewrite that paragraph in a more informal style.



AI:

Sure! Here's a more relaxed take:

This ebook is a bit of an experiment. It's about the dos and don'ts of using AI to create marketing content, and the book itself? Written with the help of AI. Of course, there's a human involved at every step, double-checking and fine-tuning what the AI produces. Think of it as teamwork—AI brings the speed and efficiency, while the human ensures everything's polished and on point.



Editor:

That's really not bad. I'd make a few tweaks, bolded in the text:

This ebook **is an experiment**. It's about the dos and don'ts of using AI to create marketing **content. And the book itself?** Written with the help of AI.

Of course, there's a human involved at every step, double-checking and fine-tuning what the AI produces. Think of it as **teamwork; AI brings** the speed and efficiency, while the human ensures everything's polished and on point.

For the rest of this ebook, our editor will work with AI-generated content, showing you the prompts and any significant changes that are made. Don't worry, we're not going to show you the thousands of words generated in the process, only the finished work and the key learning points. We'll let our editor write the conclusion, with some thoughts on the efficiency and value of the process.

The capabilities and limitations of AI

What AI can do

For now, AI is best seen as a tool, not a replacement for human abilities. It can speed up processes and enhance productivity, but it needs human creativity and judgment to guide it.

You can use AI to analyze enormous volumes of data to uncover trends, audience preferences, and performance metrics, helping you to make better-informed decisions.

AI is great for producing certain types of content, like personalized product recommendations, SEO-friendly blog posts, and eye-catching headlines. It's fast, efficient, and can handle repetitive tasks without getting fatigued. When time is of the essence and resources are stretched thin, AI can be a lifesaver.

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What AI can't do— for now

AI struggles with nuance, tone, and context, which are some of the key characteristics of good marketing copy. While it can churn out grammatically correct sentences, it often misses the mark when it comes to capturing the emotional and cultural details that connect with audiences. It doesn't understand humor, irony, or sentiment the way humans do, and that can result in content that feels flat or impersonal.

[Editor: No kidding!]

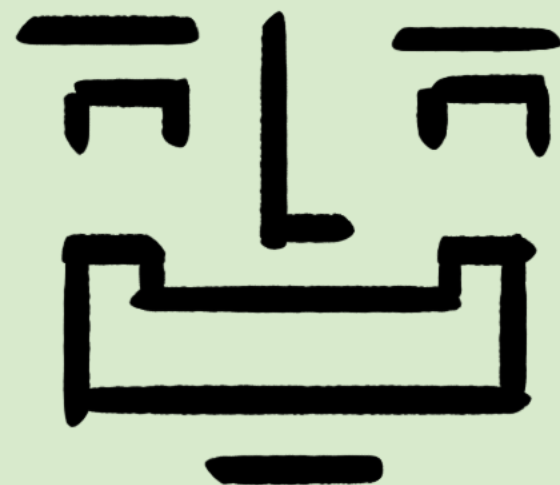
Another challenge is that AI doesn't grasp ethics or integrity. Without proper oversight, it can generate content that's unintentionally biased or misleading. And while AI can mimic a brand voice to some extent, it isn't capable of creating or evolving one. This lack of originality is a problem because it repackages existing ideas rather than coming up with fresh ones. Human marketers still need to drive strategy and refine outputs to ensure they're relevant and trustworthy.

Editor’s note:
First, here’s the prompt:



Prompt:
I need four paragraphs—300 words—on the capabilities and limitations of AI for producing business marketing content. Tell the reader what AI can and can't do and why.

AI:
Understood. I've taken note of the style you've shared, and I'll be writing everything for this chat in that same straightforward, transparent, and experimental tone.



I switched the last paragraph of the response to the beginning, deleting the generic opening lines that the AI suggested. I made some minor adjustments to the flow, and deleted another redundant sentence from the second paragraph. Otherwise, this is pretty much what AI gave me.

Also note that I gave it a sample of my own writing to guide its style. Its reply was:



Frankly, I was flattered.

Ethical issues and compliance concerns

The hidden risks: bias and accountability

AI learns from existing data, which often carries its own biases. Without careful oversight, your content might end up reflecting outdated or skewed perspectives. That's why human intervention is indispensable. You need to constantly review and refine AI-generated outputs, taking responsibility for the final message. It's not enough to rely solely on technology; human judgment is what ensures the content truly resonates and aligns with a brand's values.

Staying legal: compliance and clarity

AI-generated content must follow advertising guidelines, data protection laws, and privacy regulations. Also, being transparent about when and how you use AI can build trust with your audience. Documenting every step, from initial prompts to final edits, allows you to show you're committed to ethical practices. This clarity is key to avoiding legal pitfalls while staying true to your brand's integrity.

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Innovation meets integrity

As we’re seeing in this ebook, experiments in AI-powered marketing show that it serves best as a tool that works in tandem with human creativity and oversight, guiding, refining, and sometimes correcting the course. By addressing biases, ensuring transparency, and sticking to compliance standards, you can harness AI’s power without compromising on ethics. The goal is to embrace innovation while keeping your message genuine and trustworthy.

Honesty is still the best policy

When you use AI for marketing content, it opens up questions about fairness, accountability, and transparency. You must be upfront about how the technology works, ensuring that the content produced doesn’t unknowingly perpetuate bias or misinformation. Speed and efficiency are fine, but they must always be tempered with honesty and integrity.

Editor’s note:

The prompt here was:

Prompt:
Write four paragraphs—300 words—on the ethics and compliance issues affecting AI for generating marketing content. Use the straightforward, transparent, experimental, conversational style we have established. Suggest subheadings. Use American English, including punctuation such as em dashes.



I had entered the edited version of Part 2 into the AI to show it how I had changed its response to the first prompt. It agreed to add a “clear, conversational” approach to the style it was already adopting.

This time, the response needed a lot less input from me. There were still some redundant sentences and phrases—“AI is reshaping marketing, but with that power comes a clear need to think about ethics...”—which I deleted, but the raw material was much closer to what we needed.

By the way, do take note of the actual contents—the AI is producing good content about the dos and don’ts of using AI for content.

Teaching AI to speak in your voice

Staying true to your brand

Your brand voice is more than how you sound. It's who you are. AI tools can mimic tone and style to some extent, but they're not perfect at understanding the nuances that make your brand unique. That's where human intervention comes in. By refining AI-generated content, you can make sure it aligns with your established personality and values. Consistency builds trust, and trust builds loyal customers.

Avoiding the “robot voice” trap

Nothing turns readers off faster than content that feels lifeless or overly polished. AI tends to favor structured sentences and uniform language, which can end up sounding robotic. To avoid this, add some personality, whether it's humor, empathy, or a conversational tone that feels like you're speaking directly to your audience. Small tweaks make a big difference, helping your marketing content feel more human and less like it was churned out by a machine.

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Balancing automation with creativity

AI is great at doing the heavy lifting. It can produce content, analyze data, and generate ideas at phenomenal speed. But creativity? That’s still a human specialty. Automated content runs the risk of sounding generic, even mechanical, if it’s left unchecked. The solution is simple: think of AI as the assistant, not the creator. Let it provide a starting point, but don’t skip the editing phase. By infusing your content with a human touch, you keep it fresh, relatable, and engaging.

The importance of final refinements

Authenticity is about the details. Typos, awkward phrasing, or cultural mismatches can slip through if you rely on AI alone. Taking the time to review every piece ensures your content doesn’t just meet expectations, it exceeds them. When AI and human creativity work together, the result is marketing that’s authentic, impactful, and a true reflection of your brand. That’s the ultimate goal.

Editor’s note:



Prompt:

Write four paragraphs—300 words—in our established style on maintaining authenticity when using AI for marketing content

- Keeping your brand voice & personality consistent
- Avoiding "robotic" sounding content & maintaining human touch

The response is almost unchanged. And there are some nice moments, such as, “Small tweaks make a big difference...” The AI seems to be hitting its stride.

Giving AI the human touch

Make AI your creative sidekick

Combining AI with human creativity is all about teamwork. AI can handle repetitive tasks and come up with fresh ideas, freeing you up to focus on more creative and strategic thinking. The key is to let AI do the hard work in areas where it's strong—gathering information, summarizing, collating—while you stay in charge, adding the emotional and contextual touches that only humans can provide.

Keep humans at the controls

At the end of the day, humans call the shots. AI can assist, but it's up to you to guide the process, make the big decisions, and add that human spark. With a thoughtful approach and a focus on collaboration, AI becomes a valuable ally, helping you achieve better, faster, and more innovative results.

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Set clear rules for content review

It’s important to have clear guidelines for reviewing AI-generated work. Create a checklist to make sure the content is accurate, appropriate, and matches your brand’s style. Having people review and tweak what AI creates ensures the final product is polished and aligns with your goals.

Work smarter through feedback

AI learns and improves when you give it feedback. Take time to review its outputs and highlight what’s working and what needs fixing. Over time, you can train AI tools to better match your creative vision, making them more helpful and reliable while cutting down on errors. Remember the example from Part 3, where showing AI how its output was edited allowed it to adjust its style and get closer to the right result.

Editor’s note:
The prompt here was:

Prompt:
Write four paragraphs on Integrating AI with Human Creativity, including best practices for blending AI with human oversight. Talk about creating guidelines for content review and refining processes. 300 words maximum



I’d taken a break between prompts and it felt as though the AI had lost its way again. The first response had no subheads, which had previously been generated automatically. It also felt more formal: “Refining processes is another critical aspect of blending AI and human creativity. Iterative feedback loops between humans and AI allow outputs to improve over time...”

It’s reasonable copy, but it’s not in the established style. I prompted again, asking for a less formal approach and reminding the AI of the previous prompts. The content here is what came back, with a few edits.

Where AI is at its best

Email and SMS: instant engagement with a personal touch

AI is quickly becoming a powerful tool for generating email and SMS content. Tools like Intuit Assist for Mailchimp, a generative AI-powered marketing assistant, can draft personalized messages for every segment of your audience, whether it's a welcome email, a flash sale alert, or a last-minute event update. AI can sift through subscriber data, identify trends, and even suggest subject lines that capture attention. It can churn out options fast, helping you hit deadlines or experiment with different tones.

However, while the speed and efficiency are impressive, AI doesn't grasp the full range of emotional nuance needed in personal communications. Every AI-generated message should be reviewed and refined by a human. That way, your brand's unique voice stays intact, and your readers feel genuinely engaged.

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Blog blueprints: from outlines to full-form posts

Planning is the key to successful content marketing. AI shines when generating blog outlines and even drafting full posts. It can help you brainstorm topics, structure ideas, and provide rough drafts for everything from industry analyses to educational guides.

With a clear outline, you can quickly zero in on the content that matters, saving hours that would otherwise be spent staring at a blank screen. But while AI does a good job of organizing thoughts, it often lacks that human spark. Always, it needs a human to refine the draft, enrich the details, and steer the narrative to reflect your brand’s character.

Marketing materials that convert: web copy and advertisements

You can use AI to generate multiple variants of your key messages, so you can test what works best with your audience. It’s a handy way to maintain consistency across your brand while working at scale. You can ensure that every ad or landing page uses optimized language and persuasive calls to action.

The risk, as we have seen in this ebook, is repetition and generic messaging. With AI delivering speed and scalability, it’s the job of the creatives and editors to add the human touches that ensure relatable and intriguing relevance for the audience.

The perfect partnership: AI efficiency and human creativity

These use cases show how AI and humans can work together to produce better marketing content. AI streamlines the groundwork for emails, blogs, and marketing materials, providing speed and scale that were once unimaginable. But it still can’t replace the depth of human insight, creativity, and ethical judgment. By blending AI’s efficiency with human innovation, marketers can meet their goals while keeping their content authentic and meaningful. That’s the key to building genuine connections with your audience.

Editor's note:

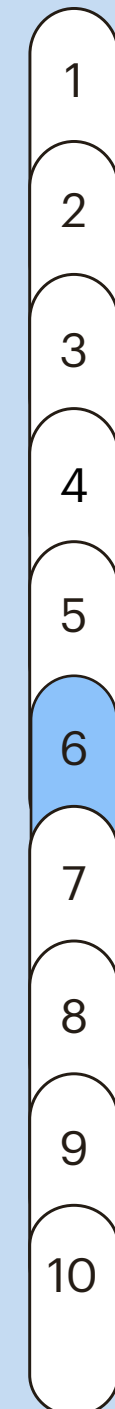
Here's the prompt:

Prompt:

Write 500 words on use cases for AI-generated content

- Email and SMS content
- Crafting blog outlines and blog posts
- Producing marketing materials like web copy, advertisements, etc.

We appear to be back in sync again. This is a key section so I allowed the AI more words. The response needed little editing, but I took the opportunity to make reference to Intuit Assist for Mailchimp because it's relevant in this context. I will not mention Mailchimp to the AI—I don't want to talk too blatantly about our activities in an open forum that learns from my input and effectively shares that learning with every other user.



Leave nothing to chance

Double-checking AI's “facts”

Improving accuracy starts with verifying the AI's claims against multiple trustworthy sources. Don't rely on one source alone—cross-check details to spot inconsistencies or gaps. When handling data-heavy content, official reports, industry white papers, or government databases are your go-to. For general knowledge, pairing AI outputs with a credible reference library is a smart move. AI can occasionally fill in gaps with incorrect guesses, so stay sharp and dig into specifics when something feels off.

Don't leave anything to chance

For trickier topics, get expert help. If AI is writing about something technical, like health or law, involve a professional who knows the subject inside out. They'll notice errors or subtle nuances that general systems could miss. Setting up a quick fact-check checklist also makes things smoother. Include questions like: “Is the claim backed up by reliable sources?” or “Does the information stay true to the topic's context?”

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Use smart tools for smarter content

The right tools can make quality control easier. Fact-checking platforms, or citation generators linked to academic databases can fast-track the verification process. Plagiarism checkers are also essential, ensuring the AI isn’t unintentionally regurgitating content from elsewhere. Integrating AI models with tools trained on industry-specific data (like specialist sites for medical content) can boost accuracy for niche subjects.

If your workflow allows, try AI quality assurance plugins that detect errors or inconsistencies in real time. These tools are great for flagging potential issues before you even start your review. Combined with human oversight, these add another layer of reliability.

The golden rule: humans lead the process

The best results happen when humans guide AI, not the other way around. Take the time to fact-check, refine, and tweak. When humans and tools work hand-in-hand, the content stands a far greater chance of being accurate, trustworthy, and useful.

Editor’s note:



Prompt:
Write 300 words with subheads on improving content accuracy and reliability for AI content

- Techniques for fact-checking AI-generated content
- Tools to enhance the quality and reliability of AI content

I added one subhead and made some very minor adjustments. Otherwise, this is all AI. I have, of course, followed this guidance.

Let tech talk to tech

Building the foundation: keyword research

Effective SEO starts with understanding what your audience is searching for. AI can help identify high-impact keywords by analyzing search trends and competitor strategies. But remember, it's not just about stuffing those keywords everywhere. They need to flow naturally within your content. Use AI for guidance, but refine keyword placement manually to keep your writing authentic. Aim for relevance; keywords should align with your topic and add real value to your audience.

Structuring for search engines

Search engines love well-organized content. AI can generate outlines that ensure your marketing content is structured with headings, subheadings, and short paragraphs. This structure makes it easier for search engines to crawl and rank your page. Use tools to optimize your meta titles, descriptions, and header tags. Beware though, AI can miss the finer details. Always double-check the final layout to ensure it meets SEO guidelines while remaining readable and engaging.

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Balancing content quality and optimization

Search engines prioritize user experience, so your content needs to be valuable, not just keyword-focused. AI can help create blog posts, web copy, and articles optimized for SEO, but it may lack depth or originality. You need to add those finishing touches, injecting insight, personality, or humor to make your content stand out. Search engines notice when people engage with your content, so quality is just as important as optimization.

Avoiding pitfalls: ethics in SEO practices

AI is capable of generating a lot of content fast, but quantity doesn't equal quality. Avoid practices like keyword stuffing or clickbait headlines—they can harm your rankings over time. Stay ethical by focusing on delivering honest, relevant content. Think of AI as your assistant: great for groundwork, but needing human oversight to ensure the results align with your brand and SEO best practices.

Editor's note:



Prompt:
Write 300 words with subheads on search engine optimization techniques

- SEO best practices for AI-generated content

Again, I've hardly touched this copy. It's getting scary now. Or exciting, depending on your point of view. It's certainly pretty impressive.

Keeping AI brand-compliant

Setting AI up for success

AI performs best when given clear instructions. Providing detailed prompts that reference your brand guidelines, such as preferred tone, keywords, and formatting styles, can help AI produce content that is closer to what you need. From colors and fonts in visual ads to conversational style in web copy, your brand's identity should guide every word and design element. The key is precision: the more specific your guidelines, the better AI's output will reflect your brand.

Human oversight: The final layer

AI is a powerful assistant, but it's not perfect. Reviewing AI-generated content is essential, both for accuracy, and to ensure every piece feels true to your brand. Editing for tone, personality, and compliance turns AI's draft into a finished product. With human creativity guiding the process, you can guarantee your marketing content stands out while staying consistent and trustworthy. That's how brands build loyalty.

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Compliance means credibility

Your marketing content isn’t just about what you say, it’s about following the rules. When AI creates content, you need to make sure it aligns with legal and industry standards. This includes advertising regulations, intellectual property laws, and privacy rules. AI doesn’t understand compliance on its own, so it’s up to you to review everything it generates. Missing this step could lead to legal wrangles, or damage to your reputation. A compliance checklist is a must-have for quality control.

Consistency is the key

AI can mimic tone and style, but it doesn’t inherently understand your brand. It’s up to you to establish clear guidelines and ensure every piece of AI-generated content fits seamlessly into your overall strategy. Without this oversight, your messaging risks becoming fragmented, with the potential to confuse customers and, ultimately diminish the value of your brand as a marketing asset.

Editor's note:

The prompt for this was:

Prompt:

Write 300 words on brand consistency and content compliance when using AI to generate content

- Ensuring all AI-generated content aligns with brand guidelines

The prompts are getting simpler as the AI learns what I'm looking for. There's an element of repetition here, notably on the question of compliance, which we covered earlier. I left it in because a) it's really important and b) there's no harm in reminding ourselves of it in the context of brand. The AI is also ramming home the message about human supervision, and quite rightly. It's very good, but complacency could spell disaster. A cliché, I know, but I'm only human.

The rookie did good

I'm impressed. This process pretty much matched my expectations, or even exceeded them. As you saw, the more I shared with the AI, the better it got at recognizing what I wanted.

There are more than 4,500 words here, and it took me about three days of actual prompting and editing to get them to a usable state. That, and a few decades of experience as a professional writer of business copy.

And that's the key. At the moment, I still would not trust AI to do a good job on an ebook like this without the supervision not just of a human, but of a writer. Even now, I'm not completely happy with the quality of the writing. The content is pretty good, but the language and the style are still a bit generic. Better than robotic, but it's not going to wow you with its personality.

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Still, at the risk of sounding like a jaded hack, the fact is that most of what this ebook tells you about the challenges of working with AI has always been a problem. Writers have a perpetual beef about the brief, and AI has the same needs. And all good writers, even Dickens and Hemingway, need editors.

Yet it’s clear that AI is already viable as a writing tool, albeit with human control. And for marketing assets like emails and social posts, it can be very powerful.

I would confidently back an AI against a human writer in a contest to see whose subject line or social post headline generates the most clicks. An AI will focus on what works, without question, and (provided the brief is good) will deliver something effective at phenomenal speed. You just need to make sure it’s ethical, legally compliant, and on brand.

As a proof of concept, this has been a fascinating experiment. If only I could chat it over with my new pal in a friendly bar somewhere. There’s no substitute for that.

Ready to try AI?

Learn more

[What is AI ethics?](#)

[Building trust in AI](#)

[Working with AI tools](#)

[Unlocking business insights with AI](#)

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