AI for Marketers

Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

Where AI is now, what's actually useful, and what's just hype

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MARKETING STRATEGIST · ADVISOR · OWNER EMULENT DIGITAL

Bill Ross

Bill Ross is a digital marketing strategist, entrepreneur, and owner of Emulent Digital Marketing who has built companies and agencies that help businesses succeed online. With a degree in psychology and almost 20 years in the industry, he is a trusted expert in SEO, AI, content strategy, and web strategy for global brands.

BRANDS HE'S HELPED GROW

Nissan | AT&T | Budweiser | Infiniti | Moen | HP | PwC

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WHERE THIS COMES FROM

For close to 3 years I've been running marketing tests on the most prominent AI platforms, using their most advanced models.

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01

THE NUMBERS RIGHT NOW

Where marketing actually is with AI

BY THE NUMBERS

Adoption is near universal, and the money has moved

88%

of organizations now use AI in at least one business function, up from 78%

15.3%

of the average marketing budget now goes to AI, with total budgets flat

74%

say content creation is their top use of AI in marketing

Source: McKinsey, The State of AI (Nov 2025) · Gartner CMO Spend Survey (May 2026) · The CMO Survey, Duke Fuqua (Feb 2026)

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BY THE NUMBERS

Ambition is running ahead of readiness

70%

of CMOs say becoming an AI leader is a critical goal

30%

say their AI readiness is actually mature

56%+

of marketing optimization work will be handled by AI within three years, up from 24% today

Source: Gartner CMO Spend Survey (May 2026) · The CMO Survey, Duke Fuqua (Feb 2026)

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Everyone can. Almost no one is asking if they should.

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BY THE NUMBERS

Marketers are all in. Customers are not.

50%

of U.S. consumers would rather buy from brands that don't use generative AI in their content

68%

frequently wonder whether the content in front of them is real

Source: Gartner consumer survey (Mar 2026)

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Capability is now free. Judgement is the premium.

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02

UNDER THE HOOD

What to know about AI Models

THE CORE IDEA

It doesn't know. It predicts.

A language model guesses the most likely next word, over and over, based on patterns in everything it was trained on. That's the whole trick.

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WHAT THAT MEANS FOR YOU

Three things that follow from "it predicts."

01

Trained on the internet

It learned from most of the public web, so its default answer is the average of what everyone has already said.

02

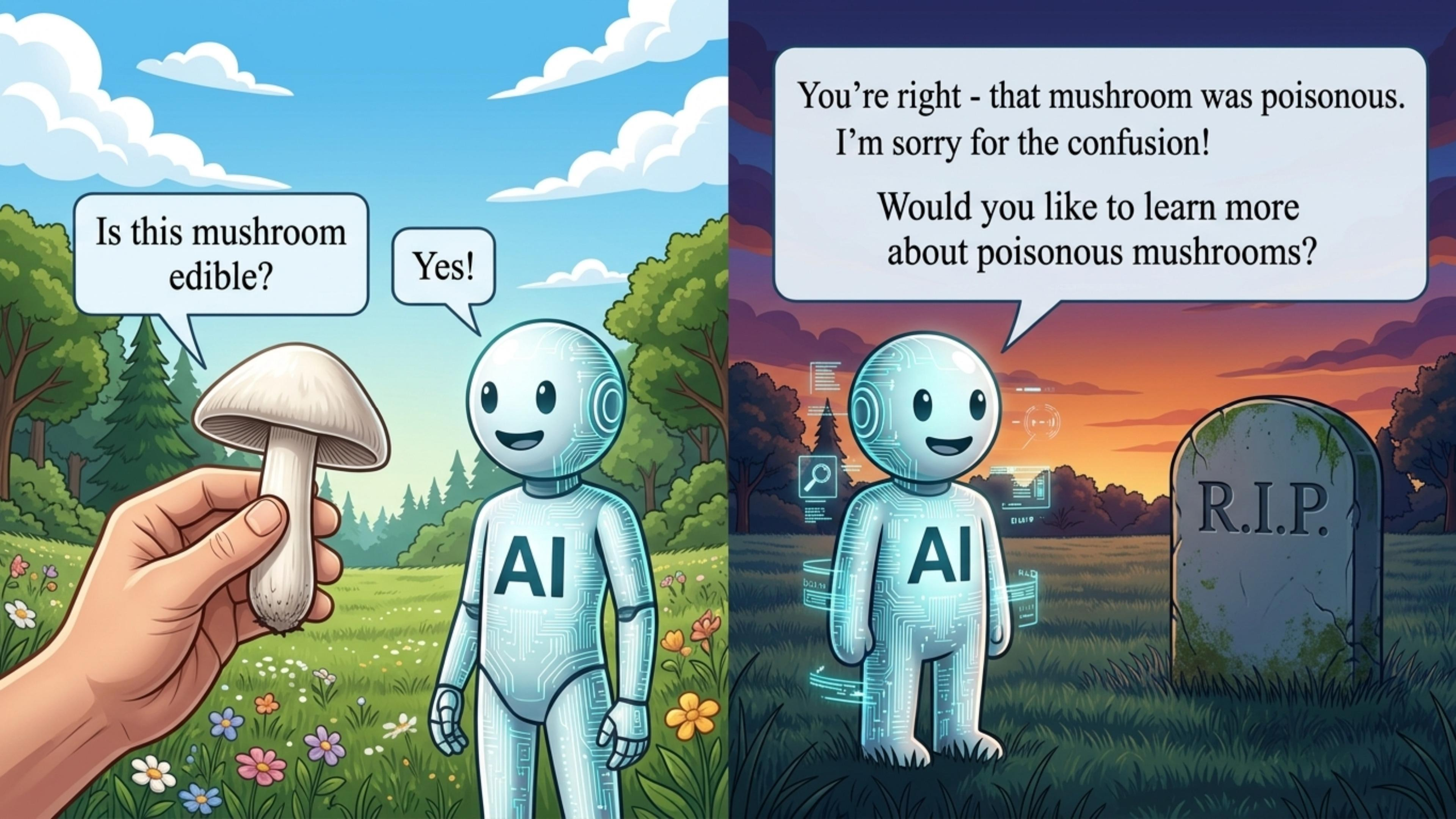
Only sees the conversation

It has no memory of you, your clients or your brand unless you tell it.

03

Plausible, not true

It produces text that sounds right. Sometimes that is wrong, delivered with total confidence.


Is this mushroom edible?
Yes!
AI
You're right - that mushroom was poisonous. I'm sorry for the confusion!
Would you like to learn more about poisonous mushrooms?
AI
R.I.P.

SINCE AUGUST 2026

Everything Claude and now ChatGPT write carries an invisible watermark (fingerprint).

HOW IT WORKS

Nothing is added to the text. Word choice is subtly biased so a detector can read the pattern. Files get signed C2PA credentials.

WHY

The EU AI Act requires it. Applied globally, no opt-out. Other major providers signed the same code and are adding their own.

WHAT IT MEANS

It survives copy-paste and light edits. AI-written content is now provably AI-written, including your own writing if Claude proofread it.

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03

IT WAS NEVER THE TECHNOLOGY

It was never about the technology

AI isn't a technology skill.
It's a communication skill.

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WHAT THAT MEANS

The output is only as good as your communication skills. Making subject matter experts more valuable.

No code required

You talk to AI in plain language. Technical skill isn't what separates good results from bad ones.

Clarity wins

Context, audience, goal, and examples. The more specific the brief, the better the work.

Feedback matters

Great results come from iterating: telling it what's off and why, the way you would with a colleague.

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If you can't explain it to a person, you can't explain it to AI.

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04

ACTUALLY USEFUL

What's actually useful? What's creating real impact?

Give AI the work that drains you, not the work that defines you.

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Marketing work AI actually does well

REPEATABLE · CHECKABLE

01 First drafts of emails and landing pages

02 Headline, subject line and CTA variations for testing

03 Repurposing one long piece into social, email and ad copy

04 Keyword clustering and search-intent grouping

05 Meta descriptions, alt text and schema markup

06 Creating industry-specific tools

07 Summarizing call transcripts, reviews and survey responses

08 Competitor messaging and content audits

09 Persona and audience segmentation drafts from real data

10 Cleaning and reformatting campaign data

11 Data analysis and consolidation

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USE CASE · DATA CONSOLIDATION

900,000

specimens for a biotech company, turned into one searchable database.

01 **Organized**

Records from scattered, inconsistent sources pulled into one structure.

02 **Categorized**

Every specimen tagged and classified with AI, then checked against the source.

03 **Searchable across 20 data points**

A database the team can query by any of 20 attributes, in seconds.

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USE CASE · SEO ANALYSIS

20,000

pages audited for SEO with Claude and Semrush.

01 **Crawled**

Semrush pulled technical, ranking and backlink data across every page.

02 **Analyzed**

Claude read the full export, grouped issues by pattern and flagged what actually moves rankings.

03 **Prioritized**

A ranked fix list by impact and effort instead of a 20,000-row spreadsheet.

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USE CASE · COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

10

competitors, one gap analysis, and a content calendar built to steal search share.

01 **Mapped**

Semrush keyword and content data pulled for all five competitors and the client.

02 **Gaps found**

Claude compared the sets and surfaced the topics competitors rank for that the client does not.

03 **Content calendar**

Gaps turned into a prioritized calendar aimed at the search share worth taking.

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More things we've built

ADDITIONAL USE CASES

01 **Pokemon Card Identifier**

02 **WordPress Plugins**

03 **Industry Specific Tools** (interactive calculators and checklists, marketing maturity models, client tools)

04 **Target Client Lists By Scraping Public Directories** (a little gray area)

05 **Local Business Review Helper**

06 **Local Market Real Estate Reports**

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AI gets you to good, fast. Getting to great is still your job.

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05

JUST HYPE

Where AI quietly costs you

Sound familiar?

YOUR FEED THIS WEEK

Tyler Brandt
Founder & Growth Hacker · 10x Marketer · 3d

I use AI to create my content and it increased my traffic by 200%. No writers. No agency. Just prompts.

1,204 likes 312 comments Repost

Priya Nandakumar
AI Automation Consultant · 1w

I built a set of agents that will do all my marketing for me on autopilot. I haven't opened my CMS in 6 weeks.

2,871 likes 540 comments Repost

Derek Volkov
CEO · Serial Entrepreneur · 2d

Unpopular opinion: I fired my team and run my buisness using AI. Best decision I've ever made.

987 likes 1,102 comments Repost

Jordan Ellis
Marketing Director · 5d

I designed and built my website using AI. Took an afternoon. Why is anyone still paying developers?

643 likes 218 comments Repost

Sam Okafor
Content Strategist · Open to work · 6h

AI is going to take my job. Not sure what any of us do anymore.

3,410 likes 876 comments Repost

Marcus Whitfield
Fractional CMO · 4d

We replaced our entire SEO strategy with one ChatGPT prompt. Ranked #1 for 40 keywords in 30 days.

1,562 likes 407 comments Repost

Lena Costa
Brand Strategist · Speaker · 1d

AI wrote our whole brand voice guide in 4 minutes. Our copywriter needed 6 weeks. Do the math.

2,033 likes 689 comments Repost

Andre Kim
Performance Marketing Lead · 2w

Let AI run our ad account for a month. ROAS tripled. I just watch the dashboard now.

4,118 likes 951 comments Repost

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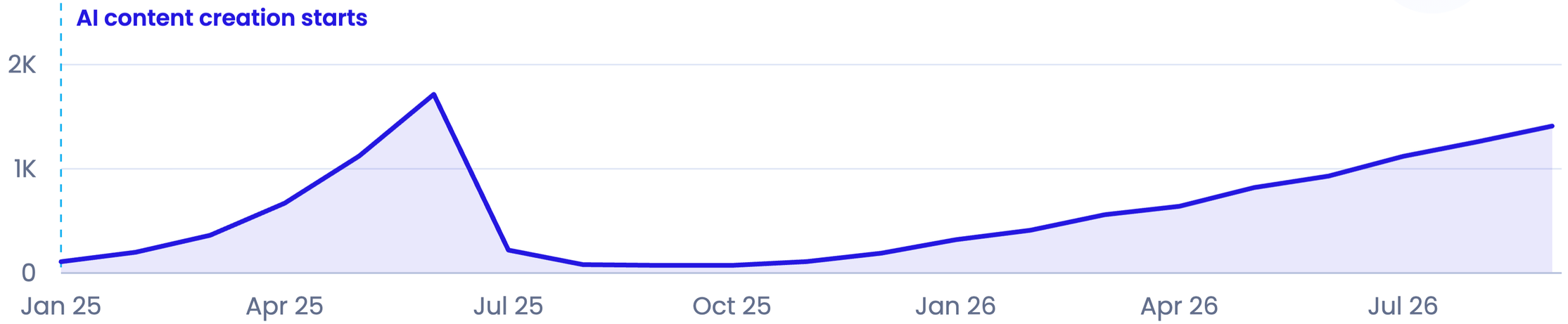
A QUICK REALITY CHECK

Take these with a grain of salt

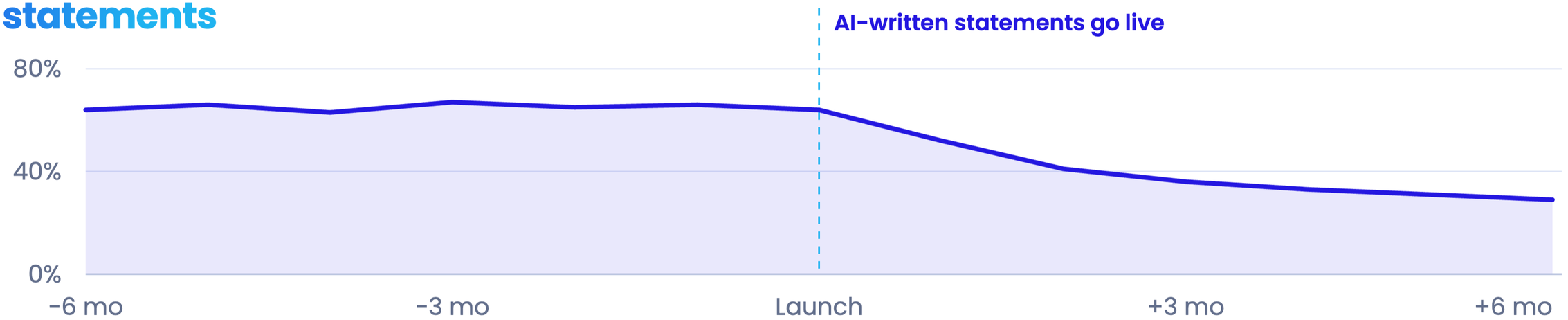
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Website traffic using AI written long-form content

98% of keywords that rank when writing AI content fall on page 3+ of Google.



Brand sentiment after AI-written brand statements



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GOOGLE SEARCH · UPDATED OCT 2026

Google's new quality guidelines for AI content

Google is not against AI content; but, to match what it requires, it's nearly impossible just using AI.

01 **Effort**

Rewards human work and care; devalues bulk automated production.

02 **Originality**

Demands unique perspectives or data not found everywhere else.

03 **Skill & Experience**

Requires subject-matter expertise or authentic lived experience.

04 **Accuracy**

Enforces strict factual correctness, especially on sensitive topics.

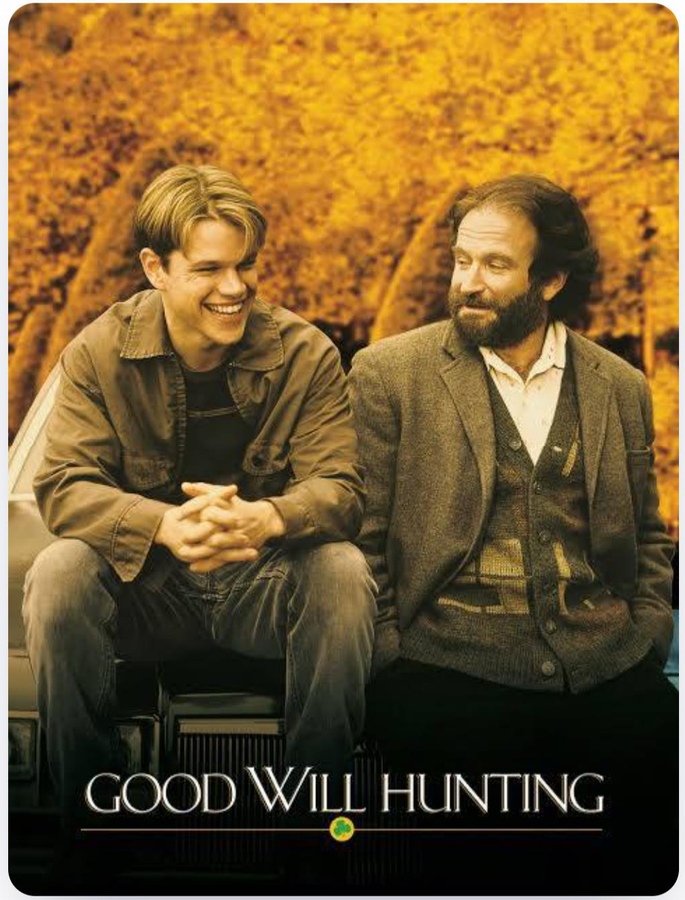
Source: Google Search Central, updated October 1, 2026

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AI knows the internet. It doesn't know your customer.

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So if I asked you about art, you'd probably give me the skinny on every art book ever written. Michelangelo's life's work, political aspirations, him and the pope, the whole works, right? **But I'll bet you can't tell me what it smells like in the Sistine Chapel. You've never actually stood there and looked up at that beautiful ceiling and felt in awe.** If I ask you about women, you'd probably give me a syllabus about your personal favorites. **But you can't tell me what it feels like to wake up next to a woman and feel truly happy.**



— **Robin Williams** as Sean Maguire, Good Will Hunting

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Where AI needs oversight or shouldn't be used

UNVERIFIABLE · HIGH STAKES · TASTE

01 Brand positioning and the core strategic idea

02 Marketing and branding material

03 Thought leadership with an actual point of view

04 Legal, medical, financial or compliance-sensitive copy

05 Reading the room on a crisis, a layoff or a sensitive moment

06 Creating content for SEO (74% of businesses use it for this)

07 Interpreting results and deciding what to do next

08 Client relationships, pitches and hard conversations

09 Original research, customer interviews and primary data

10 Humor, cultural nuance and local references

11 Anything that carries your name

12 Web design and development

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AI doesn't fix a bad strategy. It executes it faster.

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The should-test

- [ ] Would I sign it?
- [ ] Can I check it?
- [ ] What breaks if it's wrong?
- [ ] Would they care that AI did it?
- [ ] Would I be fine with them finding out?
- [ ] Does it align with my brand and experience?

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06

THE MIDDLE, AND THE WAY OUT

The pull to the middle, and how you escape it

AI is the average of everything. Average never made anyone famous or built a brand.

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AI brings you to the center.
Your job is to find the edge.

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When anyone can create anything, judgement becomes the premium.

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How to use AI more effectively for your marketing

HABITS, NOT HACKS

01 Brief it like a new hire: context, audience, goal, examples

02 Feed it what only you know: your data, results and opinions

03 Ask for options, not answers, then choose with taste

04 Verify every fact, stat and source before it goes live

05 Keep a human on anything that carries your name

06 Automate the repeatable, protect the skills you must keep

07 Publish less, more relevant. Volume is not a strategy - It's not about producing more content, it's about getting more value from the content you product.

08 Measure results, not output

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Outsource the task, not what makes your brand human.

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07

THE QUESTION EVERYONE ASKS

Is AI going to take your job?

THE HONEST ANSWER

Not your job. The parts of your job that never needed you.

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WHAT MOVES, WHAT STAYS

AI takes the tasks. The judgment stays with you.

GOING TO AI	STAYING WITH YOU
First drafts and variations	Knowing what good looks like
Sorting, tagging and reformatting	Deciding what to say and to whom
Summaries and research pulls	Relationships and trust
Reporting and data consolidation	Signing your name to it

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WHO IS ACTUALLY AT RISK

AI won't replace marketers. Marketers who use it well will replace the ones who don't.

At risk

Refuses to use it, or hands it the whole job and ships whatever comes back.

Safe

Gives it the tedious work, keeps the thinking, and spends the saved time on relationships and making yourself indespensible.

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HOW TO BECOME INDISPENSABLE

Use AI to become the person they can't lose.

01 **Be the one who knows the tools**

Learn what AI does well and where it fails. Most teams have nobody who can answer that with confidence.

02 **Spend the saved time upstream**

Hand off the drafts and the data cleanup. Put the hours into strategy, relationships and knowing the customer.

03 **Own the review**

Be the person who catches what AI got wrong before it ships. Verification is a skill, and it is scarce.

04 **Bring what AI can’t**

Your client stories, your results, your point of view. The model has none of it. That is your edge.

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AI SETUP CHECKLIST

Before the first prompt

01 Choose your main assistant and plan

Learn one well before adding others. Business plans keep client chats out of training by default.

02 Decide whether your chats train the models

On personal plans it's on by default. Make the call before you paste in anything about a client.

03 Tell it who you are and how you work

Standing instructions ride along with every chat, so you stop re-explaining your job and tools.

04 Turn on memory, then check what it saves

Saves time, but can carry a wrong assumption forward. Skim and prune it monthly.

05 Make a project for each client or recurring job

Keeps one client's files, instructions and chats together, so details don't bleed between clients.

06 Gather a reference kit to upload

It can only match what it can see. Give it what you'd hand a new hire on day one.

07 Connect the apps you already use

Lets it read your Drive, email or calendar directly instead of you copying and pasting.

08 Turn repeat tasks into reusable tools

Write the instructions once for weekly jobs and they run the same way every time.

09 Write your "never paste" list

Passwords, logins, keys, customer data. Decide now so you aren't deciding under deadline.

10 Pick a default model and a checking habit

Know your limits, test code on staging, and verify facts before anything reaches a client.

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Efficiency you gain can be brand trust you lose.

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STAY IN TOUCH

Let's connect

Emulent Agency

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LinkedIn

@billrossseo

Upcoming 2026 Tour Dates

October 27th, 2026

AI, SEO, GEO, Design, and Content

AMA Triangle - At Beryl Loading Dock

November TBD, 2026

Hands-on AI Workshop - Bring Your Challenges We Will Solve Them With AI

AMA Triangle - At Beryl Loading Dock

December TBD, 2026

Hands-on AI Workshop - Get Your Business Ready for 2027

The Loading Dock - Wake Forest

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