

Plain Talk About Marketing-AI in Content Creation

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Kathie Taylor, Renee Plain, Jordan Nicholson

Renee Plain 00:02

Welcome to Plain Talk, a podcast dedicated to bringing useful marketing advertising and public relations tips and information to small and micro businesses, nonprofits and beyond, hosted by the team at In Plain Sight Marketing. We're excited you're here.

Kathie Taylor 00:20

Hello, and welcome to Plain Talk. Today, Jordan and I are chatting about AI and what it means as a great disrupter in the marketing and public relations industry.

Kathie Taylor 00:31

I remember, Jordan, reading, probably three years ago, an article that said, there will be technology that writes press releases and things and as a PR professional, I was like, no way is that going to happen. And sure enough, here we are today, and there is technology at our fingertips and it's free, that can write press releases. So I'm really curious because we've been doing a lot of research on this recently, what you've read and what you think about it?

Jordan Nicholson 01:01

Yeah, I think what started it all was our past podcast episode that we did was going into 2023 marketing trends. So actually, in my research on that, I found a ton about AI. And since I'm kind of a new marketer, I didn't really have that much background to what AI is and how it can be used in marketing. So I got super curious because I was like, what is this? Because the article basically had two sections saying that it could ultimately change marketing this year by using AI just helping write blogs, press releases, articles, just anything that you can think of, they were kind of saying that they think that this year is going to have more people using AI for their content and that if you aren't using AI, then you're behind, you don't have that advantage that other people are going to have this year if they're using AI. So I just kind of got wrapped up in like, Whoa, this is very interesting. But also like, What could this mean? And what does it mean? So I've just kind of come off of that, trying to just see what AI is, and how people do use it in marketing.

Kathie Taylor 02:25

What did you learn? How are they using it?

Jordan Nicholson 02:27

What I learned was that they are kind of recommending it for just any kind of content, saying that if you use AI to write your content or help you with your content, then it'll free up more of your time, you'll get your time back every day because the computer is doing it for you. You don't have to sit down and write this blog, you just have to prompt it and then see what comes up. It said for using it for social media posts like captions, instead of spending all that time trying to generate your own captions and content, just have AI do it. It was almost like any form of writing, they were kind of saying that you should try this this year, because more people are going to be doing it. And it'll give you an advantage over what you'll be creating this year. So yeah, I kind of said, you should jump on this trend.

Kathie Taylor 03:27

You know, that's interesting, because, over the last couple of years, we've tried a couple of different AI platforms. One was, it was a social media scheduling tool that if I had written a blog post, I could put that blog post into the tool, like, upload the content, and it would spit out potential social media posts from my content. And while it was good for generating ideas that maybe I hadn't thought of extracting that one sentence and building a post around it, what I found was it didn't give me context. So I was spending a lot of time editing their suggestions or context around why are we putting this sentence out? Because by itself alone, this sentence didn't make much sense, right? And what that did for us was it helped us really make that piece of content work harder for us, I could take a piece of evergreen content. Let's say it's a story about pine trees, evergreens. And that's something that's fairly mild content that can be used over and over and over. And so I could literally schedule a social post every month for a year about evergreen pine trees. And by the end of six months or so my calendar would be full of this innocuous content, right? So it allowed us to think further ahead for content like that, but at the same time, I was still spending a lot of time editing and so on. And eventually with that platform, we gave up that platform and moved to eClincher because eClincher had more robust analytics. I think we've done an episode on eClincher as a scheduling tool. And they have so much more robust analytics, and, they just seem to fit better. So we gave up that little bit of usage on the AI. And I kind of miss it, because I don't think that we always use our content as much as we could.

Kathie Taylor 05:30

And then the other instance was, I was in Las Vegas for a conference on, we were helping the state of Nevada Department of Education and a whole roomful of marketers to determine what the next 10 years of marketing education looked like, in the schools. And it was a really cool conference. And I met a gentleman who had created an AI platform that generated social media posts for modesty businesses, like restaurants, hair salons, and so on. So we tried this little nugget because one day I was walking past the team member's office, and she was like, just going like this. And I asked her what was going on, it was just, I have to write another social media post about happy hour, I have written 500 posts about happy hour. And I don't know what else to say about happy hour. So we tried this thing, and it generated some fun content. And it was learning from other people who were writing about happy hour as it went. So as we were doing it doing the work, it got a little better. But eventually, it was the same thing. We spent a lot of time customizing the content. So why pay for a platform when we're doing the work anyway? And that was two, three years ago. So, I imagine from your research, it sounds like that the technology has only gotten better.

Jordan Nicholson 06:46

Yeah, it sounds pretty advanced. I mean, if it can just have one sentence and write an entire blog post off of it, just pulling content from resources across the web, because there's so much on the web, I'm sure it can pull from many, many, many areas. But I'm also curious about where it's pulling from. And if you can ever find out like, oh, here's this blog post, but where did I get this? Is it Wikipedia? Is it blogs? I'm kind of curious, just to know, where did this come from? How did they reword it to make it original content? And just that kind of area of it just kind of baffles me, how do I wrap my mind around that?

Kathie Taylor 07:31

Right? And how do you give proper attribution to your sources is a question I have, because if I'm using somebody's research or somebody's knowledge, I want to be able to credit them with that information.

Jordan Nicholson 07:44

Yeah, exactly. That's so important. Whenever you use anyone's blog post or content, you want to give them credit, because ultimately, it's theirs. They wrote it, they probably researched it. So, I don't know. It doesn't feel like stealing or copyright issues, but it kind of makes me a little nervous, because you don't know where it came from. And I really do want to know how much they alter it like reword it to make it its own piece of content. So that whole part, I'm just like, I really wish I could dive into that more. But I'm sure the platforms don't really show you that.

Kathie Taylor 08:26

Yeah, I don't imagine I've tried a couple of platforms. I'm gonna name drop here, I tried a platform called Jasper that I've been watching for probably the last year or so. They came out on Facebook, advertising about having your content written for you. And I looked at it and I thought I just, I, as an employer, I pay people to do that. And the people I pay are really super smart. And they're creative. And they're curious. And they dig up the facts, and they attribute their sources. So, I was not thinking I wanted to do that.

Kathie Taylor 09:01

But as this has hit the airwaves, gosh, went to ChatGPT released like in November, so since November, and this is now early February, it has been really the growing story. It's been all over the place. So, I signed up for a free week of Jasper, I'll have to pay for it if I don't cancel it. And then I tried ChatGPT because it's free. And it's open source. And I wanted to see what the difference was. So, I plugged in a couple of different things. And you know, this Jordan, you are writing content for a mechanical contractor and its technical stuff. So, you know how hard it is to come up with some of the information that you find and that you fact-check it and verify the source to make sure it's a credible source, right?

Jordan Nicholson 09:51

Yeah, exactly. No, it's like cross researching making sure okay, this statement I'm gonna find two articles that confirm this is the correct statement because I don't know anything about HVAC technology. Yeah, it's a lot of in-depth research on finding credible sources, using the government resources that we have on clean air and all that stuff. But also, yeah, like triple checking to make sure that okay, this is the correct information, the correct advice we're gonna give these people who are

looking at us to be the experts on it. And then also having our wonderful client fact check it himself to make sure okay, like this article is all the information that is correct. And it's what we're going to be telling people. So, I spent a lot of time making sure that it is true.

Kathie Taylor 10:44

Right? So I ran the last, I guess we can say it, we're working on a piece on carbon monoxide in the home. And I know that you had a list of resources as long as your arm that you went and looked through. And the reason we do that is because there are HVAC contractors across the country. There are HVAC marketing companies specific to the niche of HVAC contractors and they will put out the same piece of content across the country, whether it matches your geography or your environment or your culture. It's the same piece of content. And so, when we run stuff like that past our client, and he says, no, this is not at all what works here, or that's not my understanding of it. I'm really curious to see, I kind of want to run that carbon monoxide post past him that we did on Jasper, and see what he says. It was basically around carbon monoxide detectors, but there's no way for us to go back and say, yes, we validated this information. And I think that's when you're talking about stuff like that. That's life or death for people. I think it's really important for us to be able to validate our sources.

Jordan Nicholson 12:06

Yeah, no, exactly. Yeah. That is a good point. Because he usually is very interested to see where we pulled our sources from, because he loves researching it, too. So yeah, he's always wondering, Where do you get this information? Like, for carbon monoxide was the CDC. So, he was like, okay, that's a good source, that's the CDC. So yeah, I guess if you can't present your client the information to see okay, I pulled this together, this is where it came from. What do you do in that instance?

Kathie Taylor 12:37

Yeah, I guess you would probably have to pull some of those salient points out and see if you can validate it on your own. Because I think that's such an important topic that we don't want to leave it to chance that maybe it's not right. The other one I did, I ran through both platforms was about the farm-to-table movement, we have a client that sells monthly ranch boxes that are full of locally processed locally sourced, locally grown meats and homemade breads and jams and jellies and things from producers all around the region. And so I asked it to justify local meat processing facilities. And the first platform couldn't come up with enough that was not real salesy. And then the second platform came up with some pretty good points about the farm-to-table movement and why it's important to have locally sourced proteins and the fact that they're, they tend to be safer and fresher and all that kind of stuff, which we've been researching this client for four years. So, we know that information to be true. But what I found was it didn't personalize it to our market to our environment, our culture here in rural Nevada, where ranching is, it creates a desired environment for people to live in, and we have this heritage of agriculture. And none of that was addressed. So, I could take the very clear points about the farm to table movement. And then I would spend some time to make it fit our hyperlocal regional market. What do you think about taking a piece that's been split out by artificial intelligence and then making it better or making it fit your audience? What do you think about that?

Jordan Nicholson 14:41

Yeah, I mean, I guess it could probably pull some pretty good research cause it's far into the internet. But I mean, yeah, if it comes up with some pretty good points that we want to be used, or maybe it's a few solid paragraphs that you're like, okay, this content is the tone that I'm going for, this has information that I need and then just adding the personal touch to it, I feel like that could be a really good way if you're on a fast deadline, or you just need to get it done, or it's like, I am stuck on this topic, and I have absolutely no idea what I'm gonna write about. I feel like yeah, at that point, using it to help you write the content, but then going back and like rewriting, adding that personal touch, like the humanistic elements, because I mean, even though like we write about HVAC technology, like that could be one of the most boring things you could ever read. But we always like try to add like, a quirky little intro and little fun little sentences that make it personal and easier to read. Because it's easier to understand, because it is a spec technology. So it's like, breaking it down a little bit more to see okay, here's an easier way of explaining this so more people will understand. So, I think editing it and making it your own. That's probably because for everything, like some things that we do, if you don't come up with it on your own, you have to make it your own. So I feel like that aspect, that can actually be a really good idea.

Kathie Taylor 16:19

I think so too. And I think that's part of the intention of it, right? Is to be a prompt, though, for writer's block. And for topics where there are probably myriad things you could talk about, but you don't know, right? We don't know what we don't know. Which is why we spend so much time with this client working through an article that he wants to put out in his voice with his thoughts behind it. So, I know that eventually, you'll be able to say make this sound like Jimmy Fallon and it'll write something that sounds like Jimmy Fallon, right? So eventually, they'll probably be that capability that gets down into the nitty gritty, little hyperlocal markets like ours. And I love what you said about making it your own because I think that's, that's really key, when it comes down to this is not going away. This is progress. It's technology. And it's it is another great disrupter in our markets, you know, when newspapers took a downturn, it forced us to think differently about our industry. And here locally, when our five-day or six-day-a-week newspaper went to two days a week, our mentality around sharing information through the newspaper really changed. Because we went from having five or six days of availability to two and making it even more difficult to reach people who maybe aren't on social media or aren't on digital platforms or so on. So, I think this is another one of those things, Jordan, where we're gonna have to think differently about technology and about messaging and about how we put this stuff out there so that we don't sound like everybody else on the planet. And we are able to meet our people where they are and not serve up. Something that is designed to be published and get you on the top page of Google where that's an awesome goal. But we're not going to run out there with a fistful of keywords and write some nonsense blog posts just to place on Google. Because I think, going back to that work that you do for our client, is that we want to ultimately present information of value to our clients and our client's clients. And I think that's the personalization piece.

Jordan Nicholson 18:53

Yeah, exactly. And I know we both share a love of writing, we both love getting that story. Like we can feel that it, just like, ooh, we want to do this. So it might be a difficult change for us, because it's kind of like, we love doing it. We love creating it. So, it might be hard for us to accept, oh, maybe we do need a little help writing this piece or a little help writing that piece. Because, yeah, just there's this like the thrill

of loving writing. And then knowing that, you wrote this, this is yours. So, it could be a difficult change for some writers out there.

Kathie Taylor 19:31

I think so. I mean, I still get a thrill when I see my byline on a piece that I've written because I know what I've done to make it just perfect right? To get it to that point of where somebody actually wants to publish it. So, I think there is some little sense of loss in that. Maybe it isn't 100% mine and then I think there's a little sense of loss in thinking about all the pieces that are 100% mine that is feeding somebody else's computer-generated stuff. And I think that there's a little bit of thinking there, too. I'm a prolific writer, I've been doing this for a very long time, someday. You'll have as many bylines as I have, I promise you, because you're an awesome writer. But it's, weird to think that my content that is out there for everybody to read, which is the intention is for everybody to read, it is now fueling somebody else's writing. And so, I don't know, it's a kind of a weird thought.

Jordan Nicholson 20:37

Yeah, it is. And I like the discussions everywhere right now. And like, I'm only a year and a half out of school, but I would kill to be in the Reynolds School of Journalism right now listening to a discussion on this with professors and students, because I would love to hear what they have to say, as professional journalists and professors of journalism.

Kathie Taylor 20:59

We should have Tom Schultz, and talk to us, that would be so fun. He's so fun. I love him. No, I think you're right, because the next generation, and it's weird for me to think about that for you. Right? Because you're you studied in a more traditional format, coming through college a year and a half ago. Now students are coming out with this old different way of thinking about writing, I think that's a really great point.

Jordan Nicholson 21:30

Yeah it's kind of interesting to think about, and like, it's only been a year and a half, I wonder if even like curriculum has changed to kind of include this stuff, or if they're learning the same things that I learned, or if it's just so quickly changing, right now, at such a rapid pace is very interesting to think about. And since it's just released in November, and it's February it's like, where will we be at the end of 2023? Like the marketing predictions article, some of it I read, and I was like, oh, that's not gonna happen in a year. But it probably could.

Kathie Taylor 22:10

Well, you know, it's funny, because in my research for today, leading into this conversation, I was reading a lot about school districts that are either banning it or are trying to explore how to incorporate it into their lesson plans. It's a really great point, because if you ban a technology, the argument goes, you are hamstringing your students so that they won't be ready when they hit the real world, right? Like if we teach them how to count on their fingers and toes, we're not showing them what's really happening out there, right, but they have a skill that they can use. So, I think writing is one of those skills where I think we need to encourage it in a way that they write their own, and they own their own content. So, they know how that feels. Because it's really it's a big feeling. And it's a big responsibility.

for us as writers and representatives of our clients, it's a huge responsibility to make sure that what we're putting out there is right. But I think if we don't show them how to use the technology, in a way that strengthens and bolsters their writing, we're also giving them not a great start either.

Jordan Nicholson 23:26

Yeah, exactly. No, even in high school, like, why are we doing all this math, when we have the tool of a calculator? Or in my design classes? Like why am I designing AI when Canva is a tool that can easily do it for me? So, it's like, there are tools out there that will help you skirt around doing like the work yourself, but it is there's something about like, learning the work yourself, doing it yourself. And then once you're out of school saying, oh, okay, there's like some tools out there that can help me with this. But I'm also glad that I learned how to do it myself while in school, you know, like, I've definitely heard like, yeah, just there's tools out there that can help you, but we have to do it this way.

Kathie Taylor 24:13

Yeah, I think using it as a tool is a great strategy. And I'm heartened as a senior practitioner, as they say, to hear you say these things, Jordan, because we do have a huge responsibility as marketers and whether we use the tools or not to enhance our work or assist our work. It's still our responsibility to make sure that what we are saying is true and good and accurate and represents the clients that we work with.

Jordan Nicholson 24:51

Yeah, no, exactly. Yeah. It's just such an interesting thing to think about like just us incorporating using after doing it one way for so long, like, new technology coming in, I guess now I know how other people feel like, I'm not old. But now I'm like, whoa, like I am not up to date with this new technology at all.

Kathie Taylor 25:17

Yeah, and boy, you mentioned design technology. And that's a whole other discussion for a whole other day. And I feel like this is not like I said before, it's not going away. It's definitely something that we're going to continue to monitor and experiment with. I want people to know that anything that we generate through AI, and that we are assisted with, we're going to have to figure out the byline for that piece. Right? If it's not 100% mine, how do I claim it as 100% mine without saying that this was assisted with AI because I think that it's important for people to know, I spend a lot of time scrolling through news stories, usually, with my dog and my couch and my blanky and my coffee in the morning. And you can almost always tell the content that was generated by AI because it's not personalized. It's usually some kind of article that you have to scroll through 15 pages of ads to get to the point and you get to the point. And it's very disappointing because it really wasn't the point that they hyped in the headline anyway. So I think that people are going to be able to tell what has been AI generated and what's not, and what has that personal touch to it. But it's a really fascinating subject. And I'm pretty sure that we're going to talk more and more about this as we go.

Jordan Nicholson 26:45

Yeah, yeah, it'll be interesting to definitely keep up with articles and research and new developments in it because it's just been popping up around without me even researching, like email newsletters. That's a hot topic right now with other marketers. I've gotten a few in my inbox already. I've seen shared

Facebook posts about AI. I've even seen it on Tik Tok, I've watched multiple Tik Tok videos on people discussing AI on that platform. So, it's interesting, because after us talking about it initially, and then us finding our research initially, like it's just been popping up everywhere for me. So, I'm hoping that I'll continue to see it organically and also dive into some research and see what happens with it.

Kathie Taylor 27:36

Well, and there is the whole deal, Jordan, living our core values. 100% Curious AF tenacious AF and creative AF and from a creator standpoint, this is both terrifying and exhilarating. And I can't wait to talk to you about more of this as we go.

Jordan Nicholson 27:56

I know. I know. We'll definitely be back on this topic for sure.

Kathie Taylor 28:01

Well, thank you so much, Jordan. This was really fun.

Jordan Nicholson 28:04

Thank you. No, I know we could talk for hours about this because we already have.

Kathie Taylor 28:11

All righty, thank you. You've been listening to Plain Talk About Marketing. And we're so glad you're here.

Renee Plain 28:20

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