



Welcoming Machines as Audience

A guide for nonprofit communicators thinking about AI

Claudia Deane, Executive Vice President at Pew Research Center

Artificial intelligence systems have become an intermediary between trusted information and the people who need it. For communications professionals, it is vital to understand how AI impacts your ability to reach your audiences to achieve your mission.

1. ACCEPT

AI is here to stay. Your audiences are using it. It impacts direct traffic to your site. Accept that this is the reality today.

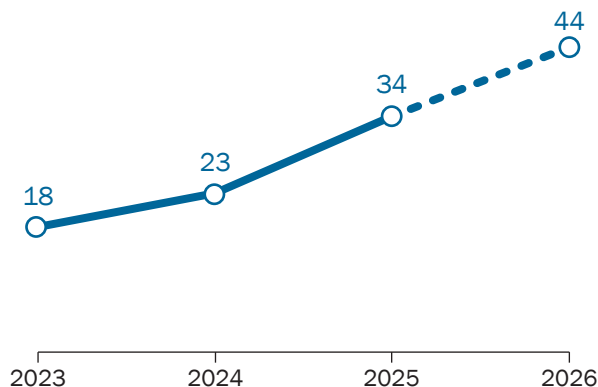
2. ADAPT

Take a deeper look at your work. Test how your organization is appearing in AI engines. Experiment with making your current content more machine-readable.

3. ADVANCE

Incorporate what you learn into your future content. You're now writing for humans and machines.

% of U.S. adults who say they ever use ChatGPT



Note: Dotted line indicates change in question wording. From 2023 to 2025, the question was "Have you ever used ChatGPT?" and was asked of those who had heard at least a little about ChatGPT. In 2026, the question also asked about other chatbots.

% of U.S. adults who say ___ ever read AI summaries at the top of a search engine result



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 17-23, 2026.



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A Checklist for Nonprofit Communicators Thinking about AI

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An actionable checklist for you to discuss with your teams:

1. Do you want people using AI chatbots to find and learn from your organization's work?

- ☐ Discuss how AI discoverability supports your mission and communications goals
- ☐ Decide whether you want AI systems to access and surface your work
- ☐ Identify the topics, products and audiences for which AI visibility matters most
- ☐ Define the outcome you want: accurate answers, clear attribution and a path back to your organization

2. How is your work showing up today? Is that what you want?

- ☐ Choose 10-20 real questions or prompts that should surface your expertise, research or data
- ☐ Test the same questions across multiple AI platforms
- ☐ Record whether your organization is mentioned, cited and linked
- ☐ Ask a subject-matter expert to assess whether each answer is current, accurate and complete
- ☐ Note patterns, including outdated information, weak attribution, missing links and facts that are not retrieved
- ☐ Repeat the test periodically so you can see what changes

3. How do you make your work readable for machines?

- ☐ Adopt a simultaneous workflow; continue serving people while also preparing content for machines
- ☐ Make the numbers and information behind graphics available as readable text, not just a static image
- ☐ Improve metadata so machines can identify: subject, population, years covered, reports, datasets, authors, etc
- ☐ Create plain text or Markdown versions of major reports so essential content is easier for machines to retrieve
- ☐ Audit your site for anything a scraper might struggle to find, interpret or connect

4. How do you know if you are succeeding?

- ☐ AI engines surface your information (visibility), represent it correctly (accuracy) and drive traffic to you (links)
- ☐ Use multiple signals, including prompt-based benchmarks, AI crawler activity, mentions, citations and referral traffic
- ☐ Assign an owner to test periodically across commonly used platforms and models

The quality of information in AI is a shared challenge. Let's compare approaches, bring real examples, and advocate for systems that recognize trustworthy information and connect people to its source.



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