

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1743 Will the Next Generation Be Able to Think at Work?

Two years ago, a report from Common Sense Media found that about half of young people had not used AI tools, or didn't even know about them. One year later, 70% of U.S. teens had used at least one AI tool, and over half had used them to do homework. These are the next generation of workers who are now and who will be applying for jobs in our companies. Should we be concerned? I'm Jerry Roberts, and that's coming next on The Extra Point.

As artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly plays a larger role in classrooms as well as the overall educational experience, a concerning trend is emerging: students are losing their ability to think critically.

This shift poses a significant risk as these students prepare to enter the workforce, where problem-solving and decision-making skills are more vital than ever.

They'll be facing off with customers and there will be problems. Rather than respond, will they request a "time out" so they can first consult ChatGPT?

AI tools, while beneficial for enhancing learning and providing quick answers, can inadvertently stifle thinking.

When students turn to AI for solutions, they may become passive consumers of information rather than active problem solvers.

This reliance creates a cycle where students no longer engage deeply with material, leading to superficial understanding rather than mastery of concepts.

As a result, they miss the opportunity to develop the analytical skills that are crucial for real-world applications.

So, how big a deal is this for you? First, let me define "you". If *you* are a small business owner with a modest payroll and you need everyone to more or less pull their own weight, will it be

an issue for you if new hires come up short in the thinking department?

Let's say that *you* are a supervisor or HR manager. How would you answer the same question? If new workers can't reason their way through situations because they are used to leaning on AI to give them answers, what will that mean for you?

One more. What if you work on the front lines and you're used to having teammates who can solve problems on their own, and now some of your new people can't do that. Will a share of their load become yours?

So, what can be done to address this looming crisis? First, educators must strike a balance between leveraging AI and teaching critical thinking.

I don't have any data on how many teachers allow AI-created assignments, or disallow them and have the ability to figure out when a student is using these tools. I would think an outright ban of AI in schoolwork would be extremely difficult to impose and enforce.

Using AI for research can save time, and gives a better experience than Google and others. It's noted that there's a broad distinction between using AI to gather facts and details, versus asking it to write assignments.

Anything that takes away from a student's ability to develop communication skills should draw scrutiny. Anything that might diminish a person's ability to think clearly and deliver results on the job should draw scrutiny.

AI is not going away. We're just in the first inning of a very long game. And because the game has just begun, maybe there's still time to set the rules to benefit both education and the workplace.

(Con't.)

The time to act is now—before we find ourselves facing a future where critical thinking is a rarity.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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