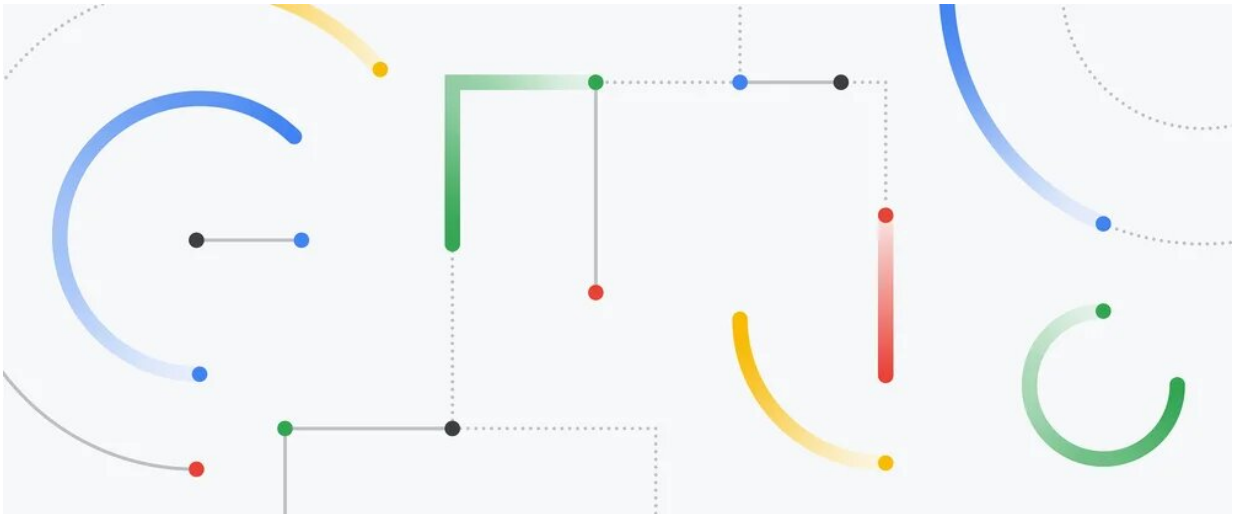


Google to release ChatGPT rival named Bard

February 6 2023, by Glenn CHAPMAN with Laurence BENHAMOU in Paris



Credit: Google

Google said Monday it will release a conversational chatbot named Bard, setting up an artificial intelligence showdown with Microsoft which has invested billions in the creators of ChatGPT, the hugely popular language app that convincingly mimics human writing.

ChatGPT, created by San Francisco company OpenAI, has caused a sensation for its ability to write essays, poems or programming code on demand within seconds, sparking widespread fears of cheating or of entire professions becoming obsolete.

Microsoft announced last month that it was backing OpenAI and has begun to integrate ChatGPT features into its Teams platform, with expectations that it will adapt the app to its Office suite and Bing search engine.

The potential inclusion in Bing turned the focus on Google and speculation that the company's world-dominating search engine could face unprecedented competition from an AI-powered rival.

Media reports said the overnight success of ChatGPT was designated a "code red" threat at Google with founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page—who left several years ago—brought back to brainstorm ideas and fast-track a response.

The pressure to act was heightened by the poor earnings posted last week by Google-parent Alphabet, which fell short of investor expectations. The company last month announced that it was laying off 12,000 people as it put more emphasis on AI projects.

Google's announcement came on the eve of an AI-related launch event by Microsoft in yet a further sign that the two tech giants will do battle over the technology, also known as generative AI.

"Generative AI is a game changer and much like the rise of the internet sank the networking giants that came before (AOL, CompuServe etc.) it has the potential to change the competitive dynamic for search and information," said independent tech analyst Rob Enderle.

"Google still largely lives off the fact their search engine is the most widely used, this could change that, relegating them to history," he added.

'High-quality responses'

In his [blog post](#) on Monday, Google CEO Sundar Pichai said that Google's Bard conversational AI was to go out for testing with a plan to make it more widely available "in the coming weeks."

Google's Bard is based on LaMDA, the firm's Language Model for Dialogue Applications system, and has been in development for several years.

"Bard seeks to combine the breadth of the world's knowledge with the power, intelligence, and creativity of our large language models," Pichai said.

"It draws on information from the web to provide fresh, high-quality responses," he added, hinting that the app would give up-to-the date responses, something ChatGPT is unable to do.

Before the emergence of ChatGPT, which was released in late November, Google had been reluctant to launch its own language-based AI fearing the reputational risk of releasing technology that wasn't ready.

Researchers using the same language models as Bard or ChatGPT have demonstrated the technology's ability to spew out misinformation or nonsense on a potentially massive scale.

Facebook-owner Meta in November was forced to take down the release of its own large language model called Galactica after three days when users shared its biased and incorrect results on social media within hours of its release.

Pichai insisted that responses churned out by Bard would "meet a high bar for quality, safety and groundedness in real world information."

And much like ChatGPT, Bard would source its responses from a

limited version of its base language model in order to reduce computing power and reach a wider audience.

Crucially for its looming duel with Microsoft, Google also said that users would soon see AI-powered features in its search engine.

New-style responses would "distill complex information and multiple perspectives into easy-to-digest formats," Pichai said.

Search engines beefed up by generative AI "will give structured answers to questions and no longer links," Thierry Poibeau, of the CNRS research center in Paris, told AFP.

But bots like ChatGPT "also give wrong answers, which is annoying for a search engine," said Poibeau.

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