

'Tech capitalism at its finest': JPMorgan picks AI over humans to write ads

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JPMorgan Chase, the largest U.S. bank, says New York-based Persado's "artificial intelligence message machine" wrote ads that generated two to five times the response it got from traditional human copywriters.

So, it has rewarded Persado with a five-year deal "to generate the highest-performing marketing creative" content using artificial intelligence, or AI.

According to the bank, an AI-generated, pilot Chase promotion titled "LIMITED TIME OFFER: We'll reward you with \$5 Cash Back when you go paperless" generated nearly double the "unique clicks" compared with JPMorgan Chase copywriters' original "Go paperless and earn \$5 Cash Back."

A Persado promotion that claimed "It's true—You can unlock cash from the equity in your home" with a quick "Click To Apply" button attracted 47 applications a week; humans' "Access cash from the equity in your home" with a "Take a look" button raised just 25 a week.

And the AI system's "REGARDING YOUR CARD: 5% Cash Back Is Waiting For You" generated nearly five times the "unique clicks" of human-made "HURRY, IT ENDS DECEMBER 31 Earn 5% Cash Back At Department Stores, Wholesale Clubs," etc.

"Persado's technology is incredibly promising. It rewrote copy and headlines that a marketer, using subjective judgment and their experience, likely wouldn't have. And they worked," JPMorgan chief marketing officer Kristin Lemkau said in a statement. "We think this is just the beginning."

Is the bank squeezing out creative copywriters?

"Machine learning is the path to more humanity in marketing," and in "internal communications" to the bank's 200,000-plus employees, Lemkau said.

The Persado "message machine" builds copy from a database of more than one million words and phrases. The company has been working with Chase to improve and test marketing messages for its credit card and home loan businesses since 2016. Other clients include the computer-maker Dell, the online travel firm Expedia, Humana insurance, and the retailer Williams Sonoma.

Persado chief executive and cofounder Alex Vratskides praised Lemkau's marketing organization as "true visionaries." He said his company's goal is to "disrupt choice of words by utilizing AI, [machine learning](#) and data" to harness the full power of words" and better reach customers. The company claims more than 250 corporate and marketing-firm clients.

The platform "created language that resonates more with our customers," said Abeer Bhatia, New York-based head of marketing growth and innovation at Chase Card Services (and a Franklin and Marshall alumnus), which employs a large proportion of the 10,000 JPMorgan employees in Delaware.

Will this wipe out Madison Avenue-style creative businesses? There's still room for human decision-making, says Erich Timmerman, [executive director](#) for [media relations](#) at JPMorgan's tech-oriented office in San Francisco: "The goal is to get to copy that resonates. Edits and review have always been integral to the process."

"Big props to JPMorgan Chase for being forward-thinking," said David Neff, president of his self-titled Philadelphia full-service ad agency. AI "can be useful and extremely beneficial in the right scenarios."

But, he added, "there is something to be said about working collaboratively with living individuals to brainstorm and come up with marketing verbiage that works and tailors to the client's specific needs and wants while helping their target audience. It's been working for hundreds of years now and I believe it will always."

"AI is not necessarily a competitor trying to outperform the human mind, but possibly an extension" of human capabilities, offered Gabriel Fairman, a Lafayette, Calif.-based marketer (and Swarthmore grad) and one of many creatives who rushed to react to the bank's AI turn.

Don't blame the software, but "post-industrial tech capitalism at its finest," if "a smarter and cheaper machine alternative" ends up putting some humans out of business, he concluded.

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