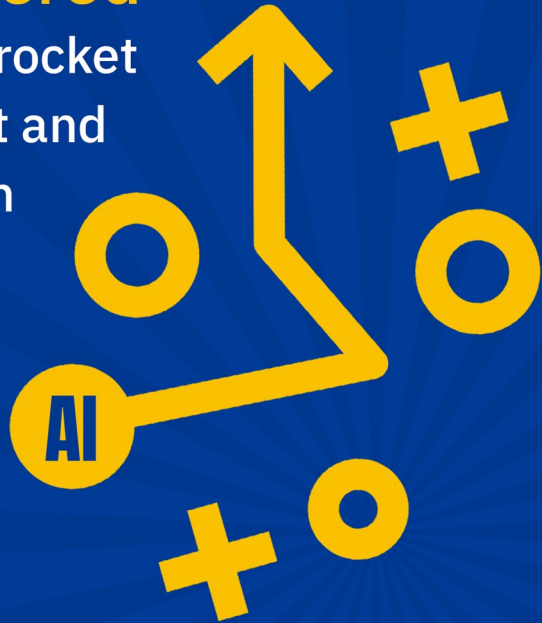


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MARKETING 3.0

The AI-Powered
Playbook to Skyrocket
Fan Engagement and
Business Growth



MEREDITH OLIVER

REVISED AND UPDATED THIRD EDITION

FANTASTIC **MARKETING 3.0**

The AI-Powered
Playbook to Skyrocket
Fan Engagement and
Business Growth

MEREDITH OLIVER, MIRM, CSP

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*FANtastic Selling: The 10 Undeniable Traits of Rock-Star,
Top-Producing, Quota-Busting Salespeople!*

For Brady.

You are the most FANTastic gift
I've ever received. I am unabashedly your
SUPERFAN, forever and always.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MEREDITH OLIVER IS the founder and chief marketing strategist of Meredith Communications, a digital marketing agency in Raleigh, NC. For over 20 years, Meredith Communications has provided innovative and effective digital marketing solutions for home builders and related companies, including website design, search engine optimization, content marketing, and social media marketing.

Meredith holds a Master's Degree in Corporate Communication and Technology from Rollins College[®], a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Central Florida[®], and the prestigious designation of Certified Speaking Professional[®], the highest designation conferred by the National Speakers Association.

Meredith has authored eight books, including the out-of-print titles *Click Power* (1st, 2nd, and 3rd editions), *The Fan Factor*, and *FANTastic Marketing* (1st and 2nd editions).

Currently available in print and eBook on Amazon[®] are *FANTastic Marketing 3.0: The AI-Powered Playbook to Skyrocket Fan Engagement and Business Growth* (3rd edition) and *FANTastic Selling: The Ten Undeniable Traits of Rock-Star, Top-Producing, Quota-Busting Salespeople* (2nd edition).

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Meredith has been a featured speaker at pivotal industry events, including the International Builders Show (IBS – 24 appearances), The Super Sales Rally (8 appearances), MozCon, the Volkswagen National After-Sales Conference, the Kentucky Society of Human Resources (SHRM), and the Annual Conference and Expo of the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA – 2 appearances).

She is a member of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the North Carolina Home Builders Association (NCHBA), the Raleigh-Wake County Home Builders Association (HBA), and the Home Builders Association of Durham, Chatham, and Orange Counties (HBADOC).

Her leadership roles have included serving as President of the Carolinas Chapter of the National Speakers Association (NSA), Chair of the NAHB Institute of Residential Marketing (IRM), Chair of both the Communications Committee and the Education Committee of the NAHB Professional Women in Building Council (NAHB PWB), and as a Trustee on the NAHB National Sales and Marketing Council (NAHB NSMC) Board of Governors.

Meredith's dedication and contributions to the home building industry have earned her numerous accolades, including the 2020 Associate Member of the Year from the NC HBA, the 2017 MIRM of the Year from NAHB, the 2016 National Member of the Year from the NAHB PWB, the 2015 Bill Molster Award for Outstanding Service and Lifetime Achievement from the NAHB NSMC, and the 2013 Chapter Member of the Year from the Carolinas Chapter of the NSA.

After enduring intermittent headaches for years, she was diagnosed in the fall of 2020 with a rare, incurable chronic illness known

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

as Intracranial Hypertension (IH). Her number one symptom is a daily intractable headache that rates between 7-9 out of 10 on the pain scale. The daily headache persists to this day, 24/7/365. Despite this challenging condition, Meredith remains deeply committed to her family, her clients at Meredith Communications, and her contributions to the homebuilding industry. She continues to seek treatment and raise awareness about IH, hoping that one day, the daily headache—and the many other persistent symptoms accompanying chronic pain—will subside.

Meredith lives in Raleigh, NC, with her husband, son, and mini-Australian Labradoodle. She is a Florida Gator football fan, an avid reader of spicy fantasy fiction, and a shoe fanatic who loves to geek out over technology and digital marketing almost as much as she likes to shop.

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MY EARLIEST MEMORIES involve playing in the basement of our home in Louisville, KY, while my dad operated a printing press, tirelessly cranking out copies of his latest book. He allowed me to doodle on the boxes of books while I pretended to be his “*Secentenary*” (that’s how a three-year-old says Secretary), fully immersed in a world of creativity and purpose.

As I grew older, I continued to spend time in his office at the church where he served as pastor, learning how to run the copy machine, create transparencies, and type the weekly newsletter. As a teenager, I taught adult Sunday school classes, laying the foundation for my eventual path as an author and public speaker. **I am profoundly grateful to my parents for fostering an environment where dreams were encouraged and aspirations supported.**

In addition to my parents, **I feel incredibly blessed to have a wonderful brother, Parker Miller.** Both he and his wife, Wade, are exceptional attorneys, but their professional success isn’t what I appreciate most. My brother has always encouraged and supported my dreams. I financed a significant portion of graduate school with the winnings from competing in local and state Miss

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America Scholarship Pageants®. I remember one Sunday morning after another heartbreaking pageant loss (I placed 1st Runner Up 14 times in a row before winning my first local title, Miss Sanford). My brother listened to my frustration and helped me work through it. He later wrote me a letter titled “The Real Jewels in My Crown,” describing my positive attributes as jewels in the crown of life. It was an incredible piece of creative writing that I cherish. In my last year of competition, I placed in the Top Ten in the Miss Florida Pageant®, winning the Talent and Community Service Awards. I wish my parents and brother could have joined me on stage for those awards—we earned them together.

Equally instrumental in my journey has been my husband, Allen Oliver—the CEO and CFO of the Meredith Fan Club. When I called you from IBS and said I wanted to quit my six-figure work-from-home job to start a digital marketing agency for home builders, you didn’t choke, blink, or laugh. Instead, you said, “Let’s go!” Years later, when I told you I was pregnant with our son and had a fully booked speaking calendar requiring weekly travel, you responded with unwavering enthusiasm: “Let’s go!” And most recently, when I revealed that I had been diagnosed with an incurable chronic illness that would be costly to manage and demand so much more from you, you still said, “Let’s go!” **Your steadfast belief in me, boundless patience, and unfailing support have never wavered.** I will never stop being grateful to you for the life we’ve built together.

One of the most significant rewards of a two-decade career is the transformation of **trusted colleagues into cherished, lifelong friends. Kerry, John, Angela, and Melinda** (from her perch in heaven where she is undoubtedly making everyone laugh), your

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

mentorship, unwavering support, and unconditional love mean more to me than words can express. I am forever thankful for our bond.

I also owe so much to the incredible team at Meredith Communications. Over the years, we've weathered the highs and lows of the ever-changing market, surviving challenges like the downturn and crash of the homebuilding industry. You are the reason I remain passionate about digital marketing. **I am privileged to lead a team of such dedicated, talented individuals who pour their hearts into ensuring our clients' success.** To Allen, Chris, Megan, Emmy, Vanessa, John, Jim, Cynthia, and Alison—thank you for your exceptional work, loyalty, and commitment to excellence. Meredith Communications is nothing without you!

PREFACE

I WAS EAGER to set the world on fire when I graduated from the University of Central Florida with a B.A. in Psychology in the late 1990s. Reality hit hard when I realized that a bachelor's degree in psychology wasn't the ticket to the lucrative, fulfilling career I had imagined; instead, an advanced degree was necessary. At that time, I wasn't mentally or financially prepared to start a graduate program, and I found myself working for UnitedHealthcare®, launching the Orlando division. My role as a Provider Relations Representative involved recruiting physicians to join the provider network. Let me tell you: selling HMOs to doctors felt like ramming your head into a brick wall every single day.

The sales pitch was challenging due to the minimal upside for the physician. I couldn't assure the physicians that insurance claims would be paid on time (or at all, for that matter). I couldn't promise that standard fees would be honored. I couldn't guarantee a smooth experience with the HMO because the paperwork was often complicated and repetitive. What could I promise? Numerous frustrated patients who needed immediate care. It was a tough sale; however, after five grueling years, it shaped me into the persistent, tough, and resilient salesperson I am today.

I needed a new career direction and was unsure where to focus. My dad clipped a newspaper ad for a brand-new Master's Degree

program. Encouraged by him, I took a leap of faith and enrolled in one of the first Master's programs in the US for Corporate Communications and Technology. He told me, "I think the Internet is going to be a thing." Well, lesson learned—you should always listen to your dad! Sure enough, the Internet became a big deal. Over the past 20+ years, Meredith Communications has helped businesses deploy digital marketing to grow their brands, connect with customers, and achieve remarkable success.

On the first day of graduate school, each student received a Compaq laptop computer that weighed roughly fifteen pounds. Maybe I'm exaggerating, but the Compaq was heavy and symbolic of the challenge ahead. We were told to open the "My Documents" folder to get the notes for class that day. Right away, I thought, *the WHAT folder? Where is that? How does this thing work?* You see, my college years were pre-internet (you know, before the earth cooled and the ice melted). At work, we used mainframe terminals, not personal computers. The upshot was that I knew nothing about laptops, file management systems, Microsoft Office®, or the like. At that moment, it hit me that I had just enrolled in a \$40,000+ Master's Degree program in Communication Technology, yet I couldn't operate a basic laptop. Oh my.

I went home that evening inconsolable. I told my husband I was dropping out and begging for the tuition back. Ever the calm one, my husband wrote on a sticky note $C = \text{Hard Drive}$, $A = \text{Floppy Disk}$ and stuck it to the monitor. He told me the next time an instructor directed me to go to My Documents, I should look for the C.

I sat there staring at that sticky note for several hours, knowing I had a big decision to make. The bottom line is that the laptop

stood between me and a future that did not involve selling HMOs to doctors. With the grim specter of selling HMOs to motivate me, I decided to press forward and stay in the class. I tell you this next part *not to impress you but to impress upon you* what is possible when we refuse to quit. Two years later, I graduated with a 4.0 and was voted by my peers and professors as one of two (we tied) Most Outstanding Graduate Students in my class.

Because of my transformational journey, I can ask you: What obstacle stands in the way of your future success? You are in the right place if it's related to sales, marketing, or technology. I can help you because I've been there. **My mission is to help others get unstuck, embrace change, and build the career and lifestyle they most desire.**

As I reflect on my career, I realize I've had a front-row seat to the three most significant and life-changing revolutions at the intersection of **technology, communication, and information:**

1. **The Internet**—Transformed how we access information and introduced the globalization of selling and marketing goods and services.
2. **Social Media**—Democratized communication and redefined how we build connections and communities.
3. **Artificial Intelligence**—I believe it is as transformative as the invention of the Internet itself.

AI represents a monumental leap forward in technology, marketing, communications, and customer engagement. It offers unprecedented

FANTASTIC MARKETING 3.0

opportunities to personalize experiences, automate processes, and unleash creativity at scale. This third edition of FANtastic Marketing focuses on the power of AI and how it can be integrated into marketing strategies to drive unprecedented results.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. Let's dive into AI-powered FANtastic Marketing and make your business unforgettable.

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE THIRD edition of FANtastic Marketing! In a world where technology and consumer expectations evolve at lightning speed, staying relevant as a marketer or business owner has never been more challenging or exciting. This book is your playbook for navigating those challenges, leveraging cutting-edge tools, and creating a marketing strategy that stands out and builds enduring connections with your fans.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of helping countless businesses, from startups to industry leaders, transform their marketing efforts. I've seen the immense power of engaging prospective customers deeper, building loyalty, and turning them into SuperFans before they buy. But the marketing landscape is shifting again, and this edition embraces the newest game-changer in that evolution: **artificial intelligence (AI)**.

The core principles of this book remain unchanged—it is about *creating fans **BEFORE** they buy with a FANtastic Marketing experience (MX)*. From creating a wow-worthy website to building a dynamic digital footprint, from harnessing the power of social media to unleashing word-of-mouth magic through online reviews, these timeless strategies form the backbone of any winning marketing plan. However, this edition goes further by **integrating the transformative power of AI** into each of these tactics.

WHY AI MATTERS

I completely understand and relate to feeling very skeptical about AI and wanting to hunker down in a bunker where your identity, loved ones, and content are safe from predators. If you feel or think that way, I get it.

If you believe AI cannot be integrated into your job, you may be correct... but perhaps you're not. Please keep reading. Certainly, there are industries like legal, banking, and healthcare, where we still have much to learn about AI and privacy. This book is designed for sales and marketing leaders primarily working in companies with a Business-to-Consumer model.

In Secret #1, we will explore the importance of curiosity and lifelong learning. Accurately assessing AI (or any emerging technology) requires curiosity. And you can't make a proper assessment without being thoroughly informed. Ignore the late-night comedians' jokes about AI and the quick memes you've encountered on social media. AI may not be what you believe it to be. In this book, you will uncover what you have yet to understand about AI, enabling you to determine how or whether to incorporate it into your daily life. These pages offer a fair and balanced analysis of AI, acknowledging both the possibilities and the pitfalls.

AI isn't just the latest buzzword—it's a revolution. Just as the Internet redefined how we access information and Social Media redefined how we communicate, **AI is changing how we engage, personalize, and create.** Imagine understanding your fans better than ever, automating routine tasks, and generating marketing content that speaks directly to the heart of your audience. That's the promise of AI, and I'm here to show you how to use it effectively.

But this book isn't just about technology. It's about people—your fans. Even as tools evolve, the core principle of **FANtastic Marketing** remains the same: *put your fans first*. Great marketing isn't about flashy gimmicks or slick campaigns; it's about understanding what your customers need and creating an MX before they buy that makes them feel heard, valued, and connected.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This book is divided into five parts, each designed to guide you through creating a marketing strategy that works:

- 1. The Pre-Season**—Lay the groundwork with a deep dive into what makes your fans tick and how to build a culture of superfandom.
- 2. The Players**—Learn who your fans are, what they need, and how to reach them with messaging that resonates.
- 3. Play Ball!**—Explore the ten marketing secrets that will help you step up to the plate, keep your eyes on the ball, and move the goalposts to achieve marketing success.
- 4. Charge the Back Nine**—Optimize and measure your efforts with strategies for analytics, conversions, and connecting the dots between online and offline experiences.
- 5. Home Field Advantage**—Wrap it all up with tools, summaries, and resources to help you sustain your success.

Throughout the book, you will encounter real-world examples, case studies, practical exercises, tech tool mentions, and insights from

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my experiences working with home builders across the US. Most examples focus on Business-to-Consumer business models, with a few highlighting Business-to-Business business models. I don't include many eCommerce examples, as that is a separate digital marketing discipline.

LET'S GET STARTED

Marketing today is both an art and a science, requiring creativity, empathy, and the ability to adapt to ever-changing tools and trends. This book equips you with all three. Whether you're a seasoned marketer or just starting, **FANtastic Marketing** will show you how to cut through the noise, earn the loyalty of your fans, and drive measurable results.

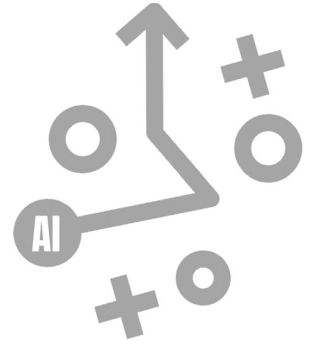
The future of marketing is here, and it's more FANtastic than ever. Let's dive in!

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Secret #2

GET IN THE GAME

Embrace and Commit to AI



Secret #2

GET IN THE GAME

Embrace and Commit to AI

DO YOU RECALL the Scarecrow from *The Wizard of Oz* singing, “If I Only Had a Brain?” It is a fitting metaphor for marketers and business leaders who sometimes feel overwhelmed and stuck in a rut, lacking the creativity, resources, or time necessary to get the job done. Whether you’re a solo marketer or part of a small marketing team, it’s easy to feel like you’re spinning your wheels, unable to progress in a crowded, competitive landscape that moves at the speed of light.

Enter AI: your second brain with boundless creativity, knowledge, and problem-solving capabilities. Think of AI as the ultimate teammate—ready to analyze trends, brainstorm concepts, and refine your work in real time. With AI by your side, you’re not just keeping pace; you’re leading the charge. Whether you’re a beginner or an

PLAY BALL!

experienced AI user, this chapter will assist you in integrating and mastering AI to elevate your business to a championship level.

AI IS A *RISING* STAR PLAYER

AI is evolving faster than nearly any other technology, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 36.6% from 2023 to 2030.²⁷ For reference, the average CAGR for tech is 10 – 15%. AI's rapid pace means businesses must commit to continuous learning and adaptation to use it responsibly and stay competitive. The following points highlight key areas to focus on when navigating the ever-changing landscape of AI.

- 1. Evolving Capabilities**—AI tools are regularly updated with new features and improved performance. Staying informed ensures that you're utilizing the best tools for your needs.
- 2. Regulatory Shifts**—Governments and industry organizations continuously revise AI-related regulations. Knowing the latest guidelines protects your business from compliance risks.
- 3. Tailored Solutions**—AI is not one-size-fits-all. Understanding it enables you to customize tools to achieve your unique goals.
- 4. Staying Ahead of Competitors**—Your rivals are also likely adopting AI. Ongoing learning keeps you one step ahead.
- 5. Rising Customer Expectations**—Consumers now expect businesses to utilize advanced tools for enhanced personalization, speed, and accuracy.

Here's how to treat AI as the MVP *it can become*.

Trust but Verify

AI can process vast amounts of data and quickly generate insightful outputs but lacks human judgment. Like a teenager or rookie player learning the ropes, it may make mistakes or misunderstand information.



AI has incredible potential and is ready to come off the bench, but like a rookie with raw talent, it still needs a coach.

Always vet and confirm AI-generated insights before acting on them, especially for critical business decisions. AI may generate plausible-sounding but factually incorrect information. It could lack context or sensitivity, necessitating human intervention for nuanced language.

Use AI as an Executive Assistant, Not a CEO

AI excels at handling tasks like data analysis, automating repetitive workflows, and generating content. However, it depends on human direction, context, and strategy. Viewing AI as an executive assistant allows you to delegate research, data aggregation, and drafting communications while keeping your team's final decision-making and quality control in mind.

PLAY BALL!

Match Tasks to the Right Tools

Not all AI tools are equal, and each excels in different areas. For instance:

- Use ChatGPT or similar tools to craft content or answer queries.
- Leverage DALL·E® for generating creative visuals.
- Employ Tableau AI® or Power BI® AI for data visualization and analysis.
- Implement Hootsuite Insights for social media sentiment tracking.

The output becomes more precise and actionable by aligning the task with the most appropriate AI tool; it results in increased accuracy and actionability.

Continuous Monitoring and Feedback

AI learns and adapts most effectively when guided by feedback. To enhance its results, track its performance, pinpoint areas for improvement, and refine its tasks or input prompts.

What Can AI Do for You?

- Assign AI to compile a list of trends in your industry. Review and verify the information before sharing it with stakeholders.
- Use AI to draft emails or reports, but ensure you edit and approve the final versions to maintain the tone and accuracy consistent with your brand.

- Delegate repetitive tasks, like invoice processing or basic customer service inquiries, while keeping oversight to manage exceptions or escalations.

By treating AI as a supportive assistant rather than a decision-maker, you can harness its strengths while safeguarding against its limitations—like guiding a teenager through the complexities of the real world. This book’s use cases and technology suggestions exemplify safe, responsible, and successful ways to utilize AI.

AI—YOUR BRAINSTORMING SLAM DUNK

AI is a slam dunk for brainstorming new ideas or optimizing campaigns. Think of it as the ultimate teammate—always ready to assist and never running out of energy. The following list (though not exhaustive by any means) outlines ways to leverage AI for idea generation.

- 1. Break Out of a Rut**—Tools like ChatGPT or Jasper AI® can kick-start creativity by offering unique perspectives.
 - ✓ For example, input “list 10 creative ways to promote a summer sale at my nail salon” and receive suggestions like “host a tropical-themed virtual event” or “offer discounts tied to daily weather patterns.”
- 2. Refine Your Ideas**—Tools like Grammarly® ensure clarity in writing, while Canva’s Magic Resize instantly resizes visuals for various platforms.
 - ✓ For example, if you’re drafting a blog post about summer skincare tips, Grammarly can suggest improvements for tone and grammar, while Canva’s Magic Resize can quickly adapt

PLAY BALL!

your blog header image into an Instagram Story or Facebook Ad format.

- 3. Bounce Ideas Off AI**—Experiment with different taglines, ad copy, or social media posts to determine which resonates most.
 - ✓ For example, if you're marketing a new outdoor grill, you could ask an AI tool, "Which tagline hits harder: 'Master the Flames, Rule the Cookout' or 'Every Grill, A Victory'?" The AI can analyze which option carries more impact and aligns best with your audience's preferences.

AI – RUNS THROUGH THE TAPE

AI's role extends beyond brainstorming; it also involves executing strategies with precision. Here's how to leverage AI across various marketing disciplines:

- 1. Trendspotting**—Use tools like BuzzSumo® to identify trending topics and generate timely content.
 - ✓ For instance, if BuzzSumo indicates a spike in searches for "Top Hiking Gear for Summer Adventures," you can create a blog post featuring essential outdoor gear and safety tips to align with the trend.
- 2. Audience Insights**—Platforms such as HubSpot® analyze data to recommend themes tailored for your customers.
 - ✓ For instance, if HubSpot reveals a growing interest in "Simple Home Gym Setups" among your audience, you could produce short videos showcasing effective home workout routines using minimal equipment.

3. **Campaign Optimization**—Tools like Surfer SEO® ensure that your blog ranks well in search engines. AI analytics platforms monitor engagement and suggest improvements.
 - ✓ For example, if your blog post “Best Backyard BBQ Recipes” attracts views but not shares, Surfer SEO might recommend incorporating eye-catching images or enhancing the introduction to boost reader retention.

4. **Enhance Personalization**—AI can analyze customer data to create targeted campaigns that resonate with individual preferences.
 - ✓ For example, a coffee shop could use AI to send latte art tutorials to customers who frequently purchase specialty drinks.

AI’S BROADER ROLE NOT JUST MARKETING

AI isn’t just the star player in marketing; it’s valuable across all aspects of business:

1. **Operations**—Tools such as Zapier® automate workflows, saving time on repetitive tasks.

2. **Sales**—AI CRM tools like HubSpot or Salesforce® Einstein analyze buyer behavior to prioritize leads.

3. **Customer Support**—AI-powered chatbots offer 24/7 customer service by handling FAQs and escalating complex queries to human agents.

PLAY BALL!

SHOW UP TO PRACTICE

Continuous learning is essential for effectively integrating AI into your business. Staying current is vital. You can accomplish this by following industry news, joining AI-focused forums, or subscribing to newsletters from trusted sources like *OpenAI* or *MIT Technology Review*.



Businesses should commit to continuous learning in AI by regularly investing in training programs, webinars, or certifications to enhance their teams' understanding of it.

Experimentation is crucial; dedicating resources to exploring new AI tools and evaluating their applications can uncover improvement opportunities. Collaborating with experts, such as AI specialists or consultants, provides valuable guidance for implementation and updates. Finally, fostering a learning culture within your organization encourages employees to share insights, stay curious, and remain engaged with emerging technologies. By embracing this approach, your business ensures it not only effectively leverages AI today but also adapts to its transformative potential in the future.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO SUCCEED WITH AI

Integrating AI into your workflow isn't just about using the tools—it's about using them *well*. Success with AI relies on a blend of technical know-how, strategic thinking, and soft skills that bridge the gap between human creativity and machine efficiency.

Here are some key skills to focus on:

1. **Editing and Refinement**—AI can generate content, analyze data, or offer solutions, but it often needs a human touch to refine and polish the results. A skilled editor means spotting inaccuracies, aligning outputs with your brand’s voice, and ensuring clarity and precision.
 - ✓ For example, after using ChatGPT to draft a blog post, a sharp editor can fine-tune the tone, remove repetition, and enhance flow for maximum impact.
2. **Critical Thinking**—AI excels at pattern recognition and data processing, but it doesn’t replace human judgment. Evaluating AI-generated suggestions critically is essential to avoid errors or unintended consequences.
 - ✓ For example, when an AI tool suggests marketing strategies, a critical thinker can assess whether they align with long-term business goals.
3. **Prompt Engineering**—The quality of AI outputs often depends on the caliber of your inputs. Crafting clear, specific, and goal-oriented prompts can make all the difference.
 - ✓ For example, instead of asking, “Write about summer sales,” a strong prompt would be, “Write a fun and engaging email subject line for a summer sale targeting young professionals.”
4. **Data Literacy**—AI thrives on data, and understanding how to read, interpret, and apply data insights is essential. This skill ensures that AI-driven analytics lead to actionable results.
 - ✓ For example, a data-literate user can use an AI analytics dashboard to identify trends and pivot strategies based on key performance metrics.

PLAY BALL!

5. Adaptability and Curiosity—We covered these skills in Secret #1, and now you understand why I delved into these topics! It wasn't just for you to become an effective marketer but also because AI tools evolve rapidly, and staying curious and adaptable is essential to keeping up. Being open to learning new tools and experimenting with AI applications will give you an edge.

- ✓ For instance, exploring new features in tools like MidJourney® or Surfer SEO can uncover innovative ways to enhance your content strategy.

6. Ethical Oversight—AI raises ethical concerns about bias, privacy, and transparency. Understanding the ethical implications of AI outputs and usage is crucial for ensuring responsible implementation.

- ✓ For example, if an AI tool generates customer messaging, an ethical lens ensures the language is inclusive, respectful, and aligned with your brand values.

7. Creative Vision—AI can help execute creative ideas, but the spark of creativity originates from HI. A clear vision ensures that AI outputs align with your goals and storytelling.

- ✓ For instance, when generating visuals with Stable Diffusion or Jasper Art, a strong creative direction ensures the images align with your campaign theme and brand aesthetic.

These skills involve merging **HI with AI** for more thoughtful, impactful outcomes. Master them, and you won't just utilize AI—you'll *lead* with it.

THE LIMITS OF BUILT-IN AI—WHY AI-FIRST TOOLS SHINE

As marketers, we're fortunate to live in a time when artificial intelligence is woven into countless software platforms, from social media schedulers to email marketing tools. These embedded AI features can be beneficial, offering conveniences like auto-suggested headlines, grammar checks, and simple sentence rewrites. However, these tools are often designed as add-ons rather than as the centerpiece of the software.

This distinction matters because when AI is just one feature among many, it tends to **lack the depth and precision** of AI-first platforms like ChatGPT, Jasper AI, or Scribe.

Built-In AI—Good, But Not Great

Built-in AI tools often focus on quick wins:

- Suggesting subject lines for emails.
- Offering stock recommendations for social media captions.
- Flagging grammatical errors or proposing minor rewrites.

While these tools can accelerate repetitive tasks, their accuracy and ability to understand nuanced requests often fall short. For instance, if you ask a built-in AI tool in an email platform to rewrite a sentence, you might receive a clunky or overly simplified result that misses your intended tone or message. These tools frequently struggle to maintain context, failing to grasp the subtle points you're trying to convey.

Why AI-First Tools Stand Out

In contrast, AI-first platforms like ChatGPT excel because they are specifically designed to manage complex language tasks, foster deep ideation, and facilitate nuanced communication. Here's why:

- 1. Focus on AI as a Core Function**—Tools dedicated to AI emphasize understanding and delivering high-quality output. When you ask an AI-first tool to rewrite a sentence, it doesn't merely shuffle words around—it comprehends your intent and aims to maintain your tone, nuance, and original meaning.
- 2. Customizability and Context Awareness**—AI-first tools are designed with advanced natural language processing (NLP) models, which allow them to consider the broader context of a paragraph or document. This contextual awareness ensures that your rewritten text aligns with your main point instead of feeling disjointed.
- 3. Greater Range of Applications**—AI-first platforms offer flexibility that built-in AI tools can't match. From creating long-form blogs and generating SEO keywords to brainstorming entire marketing campaigns, these tools act as comprehensive marketing partners rather than simple task assistants.
- 4. Regular Updates and Refinements**—AI-focused platforms invest significantly in research and updates to stay at the forefront. For instance, the latest versions of tools like ChatGPT have been trained on billions of data points, enhancing their capacity to understand complex queries and provide accurate results.
- 5. More Human-Like Output**—Built-in AI often provides robotic, formulaic responses, while AI-first tools strive to emulate

human language, tone, and thought processes. This results in an authentic, polished, and professional first draft. Remember, the writing quality of any AI tool is as good as the prompt you enter and is always, at best, a first draft. You must use your HI to refine and edit the copy into a final draft.

The Risk of Settling for Good Enough

Relying solely on built-in or add-on AI tools may save time in the short term, but it can lead to generic or uninspired content. Worse, inaccuracies or poorly phrased outputs can weaken your messaging and frustrate your audience.

Marketers who aim for impactful campaigns should consider built-in AI a supplement rather than a substitute for dedicated tools. AI-first platforms are a better investment for tasks that demand creativity, precision, and strategic insight.

How to Leverage Both Effectively

You don't have to choose one over the other—many marketers use built-in AI for quick tasks and reserve dedicated tools for higher-stakes projects. For example:

- **Built-In AI**—Use it to auto-suggest hashtags, correct typos, or identify trending topics.
- **AI-First**—Use tools like ChatGPT to rewrite complex passages, develop a full content calendar, or generate campaign ideas.

By understanding the strengths and limitations of each, you can create a hybrid approach that saves time while ensuring top-tier results. Think of built-in AI tools as the Swiss Army knife

PLAY BALL!

of marketing—they're versatile and handy but not designed for complex work. On the other hand, AI-first tools are your specialized instruments tailored for precision, creativity, and innovation.

When accuracy and nuance matter—whether it's refining a brand voice or crafting an impactful message—AI-first platforms offer the expertise and reliability you need to stand out. The result? *FANtastic Marketing that feels thoughtful, relevant, and genuinely connected to your audience.*



THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT—PRACTICE DRILL #7

Choose a task or challenge your business often encounters—something repetitive, time-consuming, or creative. Investigate two AI tools that claim to assist with this task. For instance, you might investigate AI tools for generating blog content, creating visuals, or analyzing customer feedback. Evaluate each tool using the same task and compare their outputs. Assess the tools based on the following criteria: ease of use, accuracy, relevance to your needs, and overall value for your business. Rate each tool on a scale from 1 to 5 in each category and select the one that aligns best with your goals.

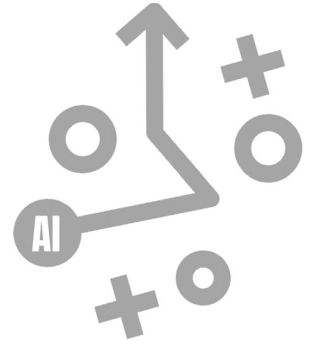
Takeaway for Marketers: Spend time exploring and evaluating AI tools firsthand. This will help you understand their potential and limitations. By directly engaging with the tools, you will gain practical insights into how they can improve your processes, save time, and elevate your marketing efforts. The more familiar you are with AI, the better prepared you'll be to utilize it as a key player on your team.

Part VI

EXTRA INNINGS

*It's never over. You don't want to be in
the position to be down four runs in the ninth inning,
but it's not over until the last out.*

Derek Jeter, Yankees All Time Career Leader in Hits, Doubles,
Time on Base, Stolen Bases, Plate Appearances and At-Bats



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