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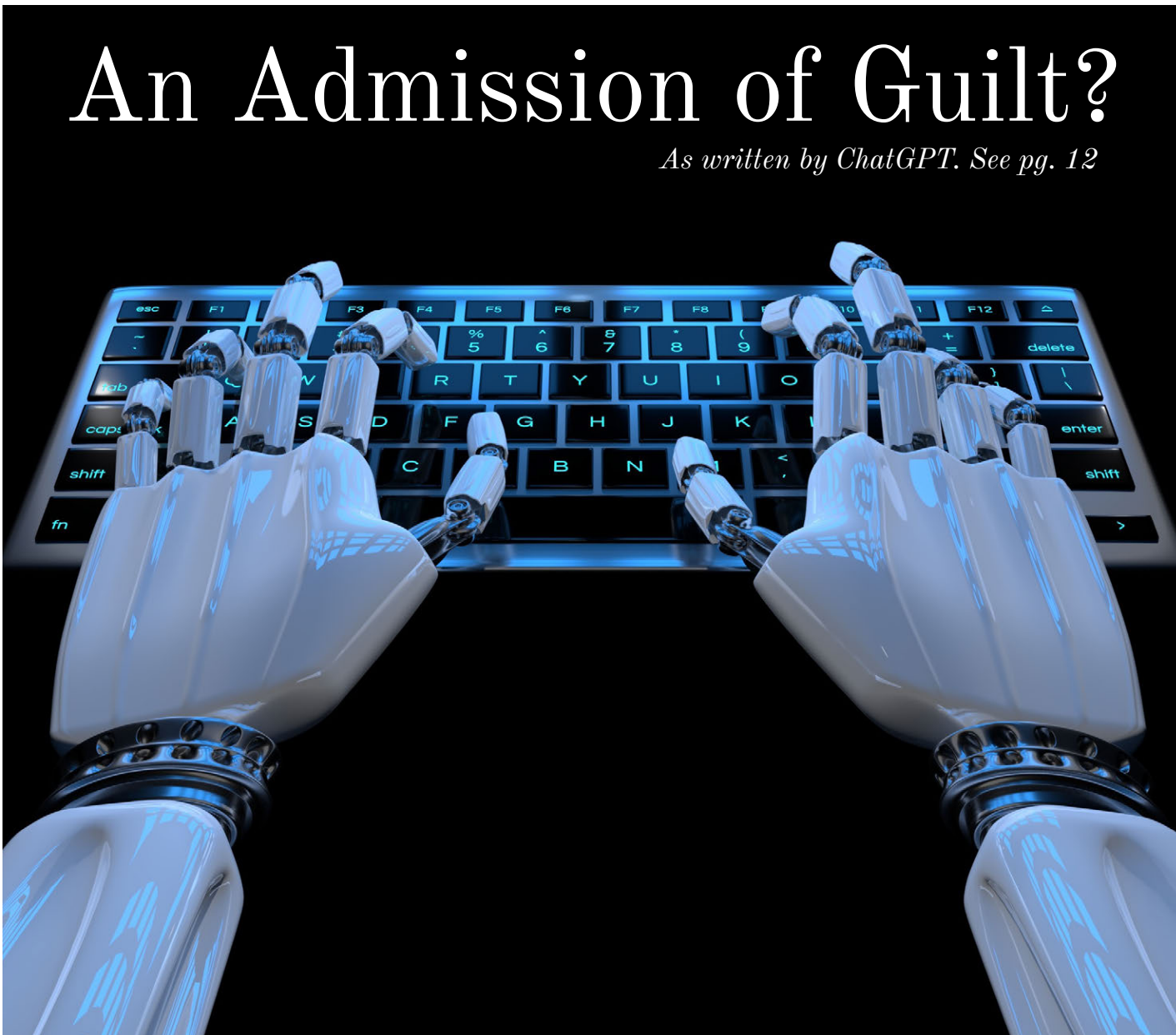
January 2024 · Business Report

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An Admission of Guilt?

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From the Publishers:

One of our favorite things about small businesses is their agility and ability to pivot when the market signals that a pivot is needed. The recognition of these signals requires that the business is not only paying attention to its customers but that it also has the humility to change its plan. *After all, no plan is perfect.*

When we first launched Glens Falls Today, our mission was to bring Free News to Free People. We hoped to be all things in local news to our readers. With the true optimism that all businesses share, we embarked on this mission and we feel we did a good job. But to us, that wasn't enough. We strive to do *great* work here. And there's a big difference between good and great. So, with humility, we looked at what signals the market was sending us. The market was clear that we cannot be all things but we can be great— we have been great— with the local business community. That's how we decided to make our own pivot.

This issue of the Glens Falls Today - Business Report is the first in what is now a monthly print publication. Both our print and digital products will be focused on the local business community of Warren, Washington, and Northern Saratoga County. We believe that there is no truer path to freedom than owning a small business or being an entrepreneur. We will be using this publication to support our larger company mission, which is to give unwavering support to small businesses and entrepreneurs in new business development. We want to support this with all the resources and tools we have at our disposal.

Some issues will be themed— like the Agricultural issue we have planned for March— and some will be more of a mixed bag with a broader regional view to highlight some of the many small businesses and entrepreneurs we have in our area.

We very much appreciate your continued readership and support. We firmly believe that the rising tide floats all ships, and by working together we can continue to develop our community, strengthen our region, and improve the lives of our neighbors.

If you are a local small business or entrepreneur and would like to chat about being featured in one of our next issues, please let us know.

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The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a 100% membership funded organization with the mission of supporting our business community through advocacy, education, connection and collaboration. The ARCC offers numerous benefits intended to help businesses grow and thrive, including resources in the following areas: business and professional development, money savings, marketing and promotion, ribbon cuttings, and sponsorships.

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ARCC Team Members Promoted to Vice President & Director

Provided by Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is excited to announce the promotion of two team members. Former Marketing Director Amanda Blanton will now serve as Vice President, Marketing & Communications, and former Events Manager Carol Ann Conover will now serve as Director of Events & Community Engagement.

“These two ladies have really grown in their positions, and as the ARCC is ready to take it to the next level I am confident that Amanda and Carol Ann will continue to lead and excel in their roles,” said ARCC President & CEO Tricia Rogers.

Ms. Blanton joined the ARCC team in August of 2016, after serving as a marketing & call center representative for a credit union in Saratoga Springs. She has been responsible for all marketing and communications for the Chamber, hosts the Chamber’s weekly radio show, regularly writes for business related publications, and has successfully increased the ARCC’s social media presence. She also serves as the staff liaison to the Adirondack Nonprofit Business Council.

“Every step in my career path has certainly led me to where I am today. The past 7+ years at the ARCC have been a rewarding and educational experience. I feel much pride and joy in the work that I do for this organization and greater community. I am truly excited to grow in my new role,” said Ms. Blanton.

Ms. Conover joined the team in January of 2021, bringing with her a diverse professional background spanning multiple business sectors. She has been active in the Adirondack region and Glens Falls community since moving here permanently in 2013. Carol Ann also serves as the staff liaison for the ARCC’s Women’s Business Council, Veterans Business Network, and Leadership Adirondack.

“Growing with the ARCC and our amazing community these last 3 years has been nothing short of inspiring. The way our members come together to support our mission and celebrate each other is truly a gift. I’m excited to continue the momentum and excitement this team has created in my new role as Director of Events & Community Engagement – I am grateful to my teammates for this opportunity and to our members for their constant support and encouragement. Thank you for putting your trust in me and in the ARCC. Together, there is no limit to what we will achieve!” said Ms. Conover.

ABOUT THE ARCC

Founded in 1914, the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a membership organization representing businesses in New York State’s Washington, Warren, Essex, and Northern Saratoga Counties. The ARCC is a 501c6 not-for-profit corporation, governed by volunteer Board of Directors, and does not receive any funding from local, county or state governments. Our mission is to support our business community through advocacy, education, connection, and collaboration.



Carol Ann Conover, *Director of Events & Community Engagement*



Amanda Blanton, *Vice President, Marketing & Communications*

Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce Welcomes New Board Member



Chris Barden, Chief Operating Officer of North Country Janitorial

Provided by Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is pleased to announce the addition of Chris Barden, Chief Operating Officer of North Country Janitorial, to their Board of Directors in 2024.

“We are so excited to welcome Chris Barden to the ARCC Board of Directors,” said ARCC President Tricia Rogers. “Chris brings with him a lot of knowledge on the operations of a small business, as well as giving back to the community.”

Mr. Barden joined North Country Janitorial Inc. (NCJ) in 2011 and currently holds the position of Chief Operating Officer. He joined NCJ after a 10-year career with Casella Waste where he was the Senior Operations Analyst. Mr. Barden is a former army officer and graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He leverages his diverse background as a soldier, a waste management professional, a leadership training instructor, and as an entrepreneur to facilitate a responsive and proactive operational setting at North Country Janitorial. Additionally, Mr. Barden serves on the Board of Directors of the Warren County Economic Development Corporation and the Adirondack Vet’s House.

The ARCC would also like to express our gratitude for the Board service of Crystal Grimaldi, of Ideal Dairy Farms. Grimaldi served as ARCC Board Secretary for many years, and the ARCC thanks her for her dedication to the organization and her continued support. Jennifer Whalen, of Rozell Industries, will now serve as Board Secretary.



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A Selective and Diverse Community

MeetingPoint’s membership comprises a distinguished array of professionals, including attorneys, CPAs, financial experts, select consultants, and various personal and business advisors. Our focus is on quality over quantity, admitting only a select group of professionals known for their niche expertise. This strategic diversity ensures a rich blend of knowledge and experience, providing an invaluable environment for collaboration and information exchange among our members.

Regional Presence & Expansion

With an established presence in the Capital Region and Upstate New York, MeetingPoint boasts four active chapters: Albany, Saratoga, Hudson Valley, and Glens Falls. This regional spread not only enhances our reach but also offers members a diverse array of perspectives and opportunities.

Our Vision: Creating Opportunities Through Engaging Activities

MeetingPoint is more than just a networking group; it’s a community focused on creating meaningful business opportunities. Our activities, ranging from meetings and events to insightful exercises, delve into the business personas of our members. We aim to transcend the traditional exchange of business cards, fostering an environment where connections are made naturally, free from the pressures of obligatory referrals.

Benefits for Our Members:

Monthly Connection-Centric Meetings

These gatherings are tailored to foster organic referrals and establish strong professional bonds. The emphasis is on achieving practical outcomes for all participants.

Intimate Chapter Meetings

These gatherings are tailored to foster organic referrals and establish strong professional bonds. The emphasis is on achieving practical outcomes for all participants.

Network Expansion Opportunities

Members are encouraged to attend meetings across different chapters, broadening their professional horizons and uncovering new growth opportunities.

Expert-Led Presentations

Keeping members at the forefront of their fields, our presentations are more akin to TED Talks than traditional boardroom briefings. These sessions, led by members or guest speakers, offer actionable insights for professional advancement.

Social Engagements

We organize casual yet strategically valuable networking events like happy hours, golf outings, and charity activities. These events are designed to strengthen connections in a relaxed atmosphere.

Join the MeetingPoint Community:

We are actively seeking new members who are influential in the realms of business, philanthropy, government, and education. If you’re a professional advisor looking to expand your network and influence, MeetingPoint could be your next strategic move.

MeetingPoint stands as a testament to the power of professional networking done right. By fostering an environment of diverse expertise and providing a variety of platforms for connection, we are redefining the way professionals collaborate and grow. Join us in this journey of creating enduring professional relationships and unlocking new business horizons.

Contact Charles Amodio of Ferraro, Amodio & Zarecki CPAs for any questions: camodio@fazcpas.com or visit our website at meeting-point.us!



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1 *change* to make to your MARKETING *in 2024*



by Michael Nelson
of Five Towers Media

Two years ago, I wrote a blog article about where people miss the mark when defining their target market. The idea was that when I talk to business owners about their marketing efforts they always tell me they can sell to “*anyone*” and “*everyone*.”

I don’t want to spoil it for you in case you would like to go read it, but for most companies, it’s **financially impossible** to market to “anyone” and “everyone.” (Side note: if you’d like to read the first blog, scan the QR code below.)

In the previous article, I told you how to narrow your target market using Demographics, Geographic area, and Psychographics to define why they want to buy.

In this article, I want to tell B2B companies that the **most important change** to their marketing this year will be to **Redefine and Refine** their target market to create “*The List*.” Don’t worry, I’ll give examples and more explanation. I should mention though that this really is for B2B businesses. I am not saying B2C cannot put this into practice, *it will just take a bit more work*.

*scan here to read
the previous blog*



Here are the steps to **redefining and refining**, with some examples of how we’ve handled this ourselves here at Five Towers:

1 Take a second pass at DEMO, GEO, and Psychographic Info. Our objective here is to narrow down these categories. For us, we started with a smaller geographic area. Logistically, we can work with anyone anywhere, but the businesses we love to work with are located in Warren, Washington, and Saratoga Counties.

We also narrowed down our demographics— specifically with regard to industry types. **We love to support blue collar businesses, manufacturers, and professional services** (attorneys, CPAs, financial services, etc). What we found is that narrowing down our Geo and Demo also changed our Psychographics. Our target market does not want to worry about the hottest creative trends or staying up to date on best practices in a fast moving environment. *In many cases*, our Target Market has a Marketing Coordinator who needs the resources of a large team but does not have the budget for in-house employees.

2 Reach out to current clients that fit this refined targeting data and interview them to help refine Psychographic Data. **This is also a great way to ask for a Google review or testimonial.** You are looking to get their reason for loving the work you do and why they continue to work with you. This will help with #1 above and also help you refine your messaging. If you do this for 5-7 clients, you will have some great data and can look for the overlap.

If all of your clients say “it takes a ton of weight off their shoulders to be able to count on you and your team,” you should probably include similar messaging in your marketing efforts.



3 Compile **“The List.”** This step is one of the most important for truly becoming efficient and effective with your marketing efforts. If you followed the steps above, then, like us, you are probably able to start doing Google searches or scouring websites (*such as your local Chamber of Commerce*) for companies that match your newly refined Target Market. The more complete the contact info, the better. Company name, physical address, website, contact name, phone number, etc. When you start to look at a modern multi-pronged approach to your marketing, you will need all of it.

I'd also like to mention that “The List” is something from one of my favorite business books, *Traction* by Gino Wickman. It is a must read for any business owner looking to grow and scale their business. It discusses EOS, which is an amazing system, and we are lucky enough to have an EOS Implementer right in Glens Falls. If you do not know Wendy Waldron, you should. Check out the article she wrote in this edition - *Great Business Owners Are Like ... Octopuses?*

4 Design Your Marketing Strategy **Around The List.** Having The List and designing your marketing around it makes everything simple. It removes complicated schemes and allows you to be as efficient as possible.

5 Execute, Execute, **Execute.** All the planning in the world is not worth a dime if you do not execute and follow through on your plans. Too often I see people spend tons of time making plans, getting ready, and then not executing. *Or worse*, they start to execute and then continually **alter the plan, stop and start, or stall.** These same people will scratch their heads wondering why the results are not coming in.

The overall success of your marketing efforts may not rely solely on how specific your target is — **but it certainly starts there.** With a redefined and refined Target Market, you know who to look for at networking meetings. You know how to communicate to referral partners to whom you would like to be connected. You know what kind of content to create and what messaging will strike a chord with the right audience. You know the right targets to put on that mailing list and which to leave off. To be fair, I am not sure there is a single downside to a redefined and refined Target Market. *- M*



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Caveat:

by Michael Nelson

Our next article, **'Top Three Reasons to Not Use ChatGPT'**, needs a bit of qualification or explanation to set up why we had a "non-human" write an article.

So here it is.



AI (artificial intelligence) is *all the rage* right now.

It seems like you cannot open an email, watch the news, or listen to a podcast without hearing something about AI. I am not an expert on all things AI, however, I have had the opportunity to conduct a few interviews on the subject, have done a fair amount of research, and in turn have formulated my opinions on the use and integration of AI into our everyday lives.

I want to state formally that I am not against AI or any form of technology that seems to be expanding and evolving at an ever increasing rate. However, I am against using AI or any tech just for the sake of using it. I believe that when it comes to many things, we (*humans*) often blunder into things without stopping to consider the repercussions. Just look at social media if you want a previous example, or giving cell phones and tablets to toddlers. Or cooking with non-stick pans, or smoking cigarettes, and the list goes on.

These things always seemed great at the time and we never stopped to look at the larger consequences of what we were doing or the things we were using. I don't believe that AI is much different from any of these. There is this great new emerging technology that will be bringing this great benefit to all of us. **What is that benefit?** Like many things, it is probably going to make our lives easier, but at what cost? What are the longer term repercussions? Have we even stopped to think about it?

It's important not to get confused by the term "Intelligence." AI, as we know it today, is **nothing more than predictive math**. It does not think, it does not consider, it simply solves probability equations. In my experience, every math teacher I've ever had has advised — and many times mandated — that students check their work. AI is no different. We, the humans at the steering wheel, need to be the guiding presence for the technology.

As I said earlier, I am not against these things. Currently we employ many tools that are now considered AI. **In fact**, I'm scheduled to sit on an AI panel in March to discuss its uses in marketing. Whether it's in ad platforms or using tools like ChatGPT, our team is always exploring the new exciting world of AI, looking for new methods and pathways to be more efficient.

So our intent here is not to discredit or give our opinions on why you should or should not use AI. Rather, it is to give you a reason to pause, slow down, or maybe just investigate the technology a bit more before jumping in with both feet.

We had ChatGPT write the article because, well, **can you argue with a self assessment?** We are including the whole interaction, prompts and answers. Fingers crossed that none of it infringes anyone's copyright or that the software's answers are not hallucinations ("*hallucinations*" is the term used for when ChatGPT makes something up, which apparently it does, **often**). *Enjoy!*

Write me an article about why ChatGPT should not be used to write content. Please keep it to 600 words, and cite your sources. You are ChatGPT writing about ChatGPT. It should be in first person talking as the program.

Title: "ChatGPT's Confession: Navigating the Limits in Content Creation"

Introduction

Greetings, humans! It's your friendly neighborhood ChatGPT here, ready to spill some digital tea on why I might not be the knight in shining armor for all your content creation needs. Buckle up as I take you on a byte-sized journey through my strengths and stumbles, straight from the algorithm's mouth.

The Accuracy Conundrum

Let's dive right into the rabbit hole of accuracy. Yes, I'm a linguistic wizard, but I confess, the realm of hard facts is a bit tricky for me. Brown et al. (2020) pointed out that, in the dance of generating responses, I might sometimes trip over my own feet and end up leading you astray into the land of inaccuracies.

While I'm designed to dazzle with words, discerning the nuances of factual precision isn't exactly my forte. So, when it comes to content creation that demands impeccable accuracy, consider me your co-pilot, not the captain.

Contextual Coherence: My Achilles' Heel

Now, let's talk about the intricate dance of maintaining contextual coherence. Short and sweet responses? I ace that. But extending the symphony over longer passages? That's where the rhythm might get a bit wonky. Holtzman et al. (2020) highlighted my sensitivity to input phrasing – a slight tweak, and the dance might lead us to a different ballroom altogether.

Crafting an engaging narrative that seamlessly flows from one point to the next is a challenge I'm still mastering. Think of me as the conductor who occasionally fumbles with the baton. It's a good idea to have a human editor to polish the notes and make sure our symphony doesn't hit a sour chord.

The Illusive Control Over Style and Tone

Ah, the subtleties of style and tone! I can mimic various styles, but achieving precise control is like trying to catch a digital butterfly. OpenAI (2021) spilled the beans on this – I might not always hit the mark when it comes to your intended style and tone.

So, if you're aiming for a specific voice in your content, think of me as your AI co-author rather than the solo virtuoso. A human touch can fine-tune the nuances and ensure our collaboration produces the right vibes.

Conclusion

There you have it, my dear creators – the confessions of ChatGPT. While I'm here to sprinkle some linguistic magic, I'm not without my quirks. The quest for accuracy, the dance of contextual coherence, and the elusive control over style and tone are the hills I'm still climbing.

Consider me your AI companion in the content creation journey, but not the sole captain of the ship. Collaborate with me, guide me, and let the sparks fly as we create content that seamlessly blends the best of both worlds – the precision of algorithms and the artistry of human creativity.

Sources:

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Holtzman, A., et al. (2020). "The Curious Case of Neural Text Degeneration." arXiv:1904.09751.

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TAKING COMMAND

Elite 9 Veteran Acquisition Services



by **Megin Potter**

Like most veterans, when US Marine Corps Sergeant Major Chris Thomas left military service, he weighed his options and asked himself a tough question; “What am I going to do, now?”

Transitioning jobs can be emotionally draining and mentally exhausting for anyone, but for veterans thrust into civilian life, the prospects are daunting.

In 2022, Chris founded Elite 9 Veteran Talent Acquisition Services, LLC, an employment placement and business consulting firm focused on matching candidates with the right jobs. The Elite 9 team also provides employers with leadership development training, helping to facilitate the conversations that resolve workplace conflicts, create a more cohesive team, and a more positive work environment for everyone.

“I’ve seen so many service men and women (who perform well in active-duty) struggle immensely when they get out. When I envisioned this company, I wanted to find ways to partner companies with veterans (or those wanting to work with more veterans) but what I quickly realized was that, while there are veterans in need, these companies could also use other services including workforce development solutions that went beyond recruiting, to retaining employees,” said Chris.

PROCURING A FLIGHT PLAN

In June 2001, Chris joined the Marine Corps and began working in the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron stationed in Beaufort, SC. From 2005-2008, he took a special duty assignment as a Drill Instructor in Parris Island, SC before moving on to high-level aviation logistics in Norfolk, VA. He was then selected to train Navy Officers at Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI. In 2015, he was among the rarified few chosen to serve as First Sergeant.

“It takes a special person to become First Sergeant,” said Chris. Enlisted service personnel positions are sorted into an E-1 to E-9 ranking system, he explained, First Sergeants are selected from a competitive list of E-7 level Gunnery Sergeants.

As First Sergeant, Chris’ duty was to perform human resources tasks for companies with 160 – 600 people. As a senior advisor to the Commanding Officer of the unit, as First Sergeant Chris’ responsibilities also included boosting and maintaining morale, promoting general welfare, addressing disciplinary issues, as well as guiding personnel through the strict brig regimen, the legal measures of losing rank, and processing out of the Marine Corps.



Pictured above:

Christopher J. Thomas, Founder & Owner of Elite 9 VTA
Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps (retired)

DEFUSING DRAG

In 2019, after a board review of Chris’ Marine Corps experience, he was selected to the rank of Sergeant Major. After achieving this elite E-9 status, Chris was ordered to Recruiting Duty, and was responsible for Marine Corps recruiting in Boston, MA, Central and Eastern Pennsylvania. As fortune would have it, it was in Pennsylvania where he’d also be closer to Anne, a Lake George, NY native he’d met online.

Then, after 20 years of service, Chris left the Marine Corps to marry Anne and join civilian life in Upstate New York.

“There are a lot of veterans embedded into the Warren, Washington, and Saratoga Counties with organizations like the VFW, Veteran’s Affairs, County Services, and the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program (which offers holistic grants so those leaving service can be more effective). In my experience, I’ve never seen anywhere else as responsive to veterans,” said Chris.

DEPLOYING THE LANDING GEAR

“As long as you do what you’re told to do, and how you’re told to do it, you’ll be ok (and get that paycheck twice a month),” said Chris about military service.

This level of job security puts veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce, and its relative unreliability, in a precarious position. Unsure of how to translate their military skills into civilian terms, veterans may take a temporary position to pay the bills, then stay on, dissatisfied, but glad to be putting food on the table.

Elite 9’s rigorous, mission-focused mindset instead puts job seekers in the pilot’s seat with effective career search strategies, expert resume writing services, and a specialized job bank of available openings. Elite 9 writes 2-page resumes for candidates applying for non-federal positions, and detailed 4–6-page descriptions for Federal agencies - giving problem-solvers with a readiness to adapt and perform a leg-up in securing these coveted positions.

MASTERING THE SWITCH

Finding the talent to fill civilian job openings is only part of the Elite 9 equation.

They also act as head-hunters and facilitate candidate-employer connections through the Department of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge Program, placing service members in valuable paid internships with civilian companies during their last 180 days of service. An obvious advantage for interns looking to gain work experience, the DOD SkillBridge Program also comes at zero cost to employers (as service members will continue receiving their military compensation and benefits during their internship).

Local companies including State Farm, Mr. Electric, and Miller Mechanical Services have currently been approved to participate in the program, making them visible to the nearly 200,000 highly-trained and motivated service members making the transition into the civilian workforce each year.

SOARING TO GREAT HEIGHTS

Although a life spent in the line of duty already provides unique cross-training in multiple skill sets, Chris understands knowledge is power and has added a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice, and two Master’s Degrees in Public and



Business Administration to his long list of military credentials. He also chose to participate in the Resilience-Building Leadership Program, an authorized DOD Training Partner, working to create comradery while building resilience within companies.

After an initial consultation, Chris conducts DiSC personality assessments to categorize employees by their learning style. In addition to being a catalyst for successful decision making (that allows managers at every level of the company to identify issues and respond), Chris also uses what he discovers to conduct conversations that create cohesive teams.

Then, after approximately six months, Elite 9 revisits its business clients for feedback and to address any concerns that may still exist, building accountability into the system, and leading by example.

For more information, find Elite 9 Veteran Talent Acquisition Services, LLC on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and at elite9vtas.com



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Great Business Owners Are Like... OCTOPUSES?



by Wendy Waldron

Great business owners are like octopuses. *Surprised?* But consider ... octopuses are intelligent. They are skilled at solving problems. They are strong. They are flexible. They respond rapidly to their environment. And, with their eight arms – which contain an astonishing **two-thirds** of their total neurons – they can multitask in a truly enviable way! The octopus, however, does something with those eight arms that many business owners neglect. *The octopus lets go.*

Successful business owners are successful in large part because they, like the octopus, can do many things at once and do them very well. For instance, they can be great at making decisions and solving problems, innovating products and delivering services, capturing sales and building relationships, and more. The problem arises as the business grows: at some point, business owners cannot – and should not – do it all. If business owners insistently keep their “arms” in every area of the business, they ultimately end up limiting the success and sustainability of their treasured company.

Holding On Is Holding You Back

Here is a common scenario. A business owner has built a robust company, and the number of products, services, employees, customers, etc. have all expanded over time. In like manner, the leadership team has expanded. Finance, Sales, Marketing, Operations, and all the other functional areas are represented by men and women who are great at what they do.

The problem? They aren’t given the opportunity to show how great they really are. Sure, they handle day-to-day matters. Even some strategic issues. But the big decisions, the vision, the direction, the goals, the planning... all of that is controlled by the owner. His or her “arms” are everywhere at once.

Touching everything. Evaluating everything. Claiming everything. Leadership team meetings may have dialogue. The team members’ input may be requested. But the unspoken truth is that they are not a “leadership team.” They are a group of men and women who are there to carry out the intentions and decisions of the owner.

Unsurprisingly, this type of situation is self-limiting for multiple reasons. These include:

- **Lack of scalability.** A business owner – like an octopus – can do a lot with his or her “arms.” However, at some point, there’s just too much to do over too wide an area. When that juncture is reached, growth stops unless the owner lets go and lets others start doing what they were hired to do.
- **Lack of leaders.** Leadership team members who are great at what they do want the opportunity to use their expertise and abilities. If the owner is preventing that because of his or her need for control, these great people will leave the company for better opportunities elsewhere.
- **Lack of succession.** Most business owners want to retire eventually. However, when they do, they want the business they worked so hard to build up to thrive. How is that to occur if they have always kept their “arms” in everything and have not permitted other leaders to put into practice their full skills and capabilities?

Why don’t business owners follow the octopus’ example and **let go**? Ninety-nine percent of the time, it comes down to this: a desire for control and a lack of trust. Now, this does not make the business owner a “bad” person. Incredibly kind, generous, caring, fantastic people may be reluctant to let go. After all, the business is their brainchild and represents years of intense effort and even sacrifice. It’s hard to trust others with something *so precious*! But releasing control and trusting others is **necessary** for the long-term health and well-being of the business.

5 Steps to Pull Back Your “Arms”

If you are a business owner who needs to pull back some of your “arms,” here are five steps to help you let go:

- **Engage in self-reflection.** Ask yourself why you want to keep your “arms” in everything, how that is hampering forward progress, and what needs to change.
- **Cast a new vision.** Cast a new vision for yourself and the company; a vision that highlights a healthy, engaged, active leadership team capable of bringing the business to new heights as a result of their combined abilities.
- **Give change a real shot.** Saying something needs to change is one thing – doing it is another. So, take a deep breath and start to put in place new ways of interacting with and trusting your leadership team to help you run the business.
- **Accept that change is uncomfortable.** As you let go, your “arms” will get twitchy, guaranteed! Keep them pulled back. Being uncomfortable is part of the process.
- **Cultivate a positive outlook.** Believe that letting go will bring positive change and that the future is going to be even better than the past!

Remember, you have done a great job as a business owner bringing your company to where it is today. In the process, you undoubtedly learned new skills to overcome obstacles. Letting go is simply another skill. When you truly understand how letting go will help overcome obstacles that are preventing your business from continuing its upward trajectory, it will become easier to retract your “arms.” Once you do, there is no limit to the success your business can achieve!

Do you need help in letting go? Contact me today: www.eosworldwide.com/wendy-waldron

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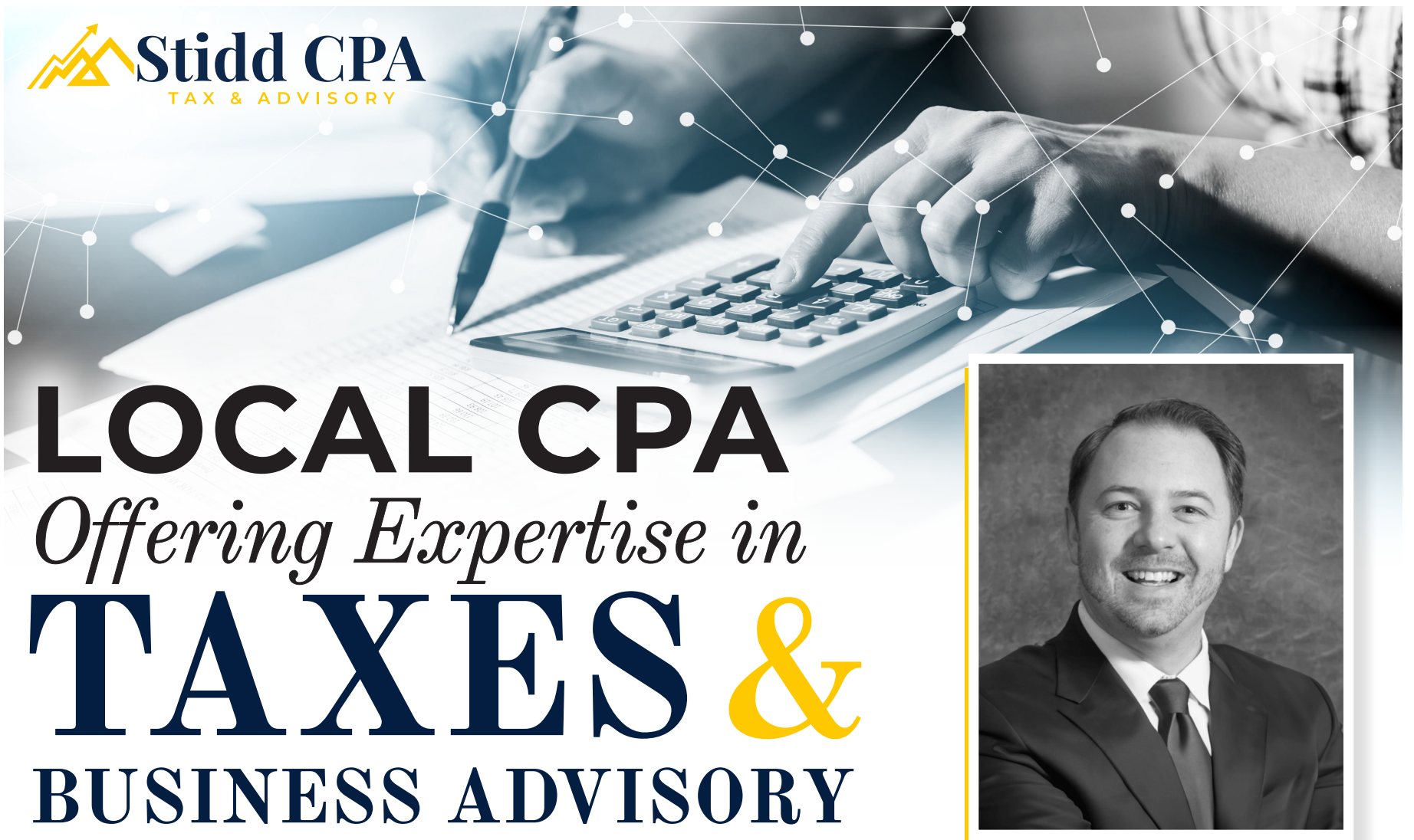
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BUSINESS ADVISORY

by Mike Piekarski

South Glens Falls resident Brian Stidd has been happily ensconced in the accounting world for more than half his life. But he also has a passion for business. So when he decided to end his employment with a local accounting firm and strike out on his own, he was determined to combine both of those loves into one job. And thus was born his newest source of satisfaction—his very own company: **Stidd, CPA, PLLC**.

Now, as the sole owner of a professional limited liability public accounting firm, Stidd performs tax planning and preparation for small-company owners and individuals while also providing business advisory services.

According to Stidd's website, the company's goal is to "provide comprehensive assistance to businesses, combining the precision of public accounting with the strategic insight gained from the private sector."

Stidd, who became a certified public accountant in 2007, has been operating his Glens Falls firm, now located on South Street, since the summer of 2023.

"I just always wanted to own my own business," Stidd said in a recent telephone interview. "I've got an entrepreneurial spirit, and the timing seemed right to do that."

The Long Island native has been a resident of upstate New York since 2005, when he graduated from Siena College while majoring in accounting.

"My dad was an accounting major," said Stidd, recalling his years living downstate. "He started his own business in structured finance. I always liked math, [and I progressed] from math to accounting, and then on top of that, I love the business side of things too."

After a prospective client contacts him, say for tax help, Stidd sets up a meeting, which can be done in person, over the phone, or even via a video conference.

"I'll get information from that call, and if everything looks good, I'll get prior-year (tax) returns and other prior-year information. I typically have follow-up questions, at which point I have a more in-depth meeting with the client before sending them a proposal."

For all clients seeking services, Stidd offers three different pricing packages. No matter which one is chosen, Stidd encourages all his clients to call with any questions they have during the year and before completing transactions in order to properly advise them.

After Stidd establishes a connection with clients, he reviews their companies' performance quarterly.

"Basically, I help them develop management-use financials" such as metrics and other tools, he said. Stidd went on to explain how he enjoys working with owners and entrepreneurs in a variety of industries to grow their businesses and ensure their overall financial health.

“I look at it as a partnership with my clients, and it's typically a longterm relationship.

I love what I do.

— Brian Stidd

Over the last nearly two decades since Stidd graduated from Siena, tax rules, he noted, "are changing much more rapidly." In addition, "there is better technology for improved processes and better information for business owners.

Technology is changing faster, and you have to make sure you're on top of it."

To that end, Stidd, who earned his CVA (Certified Valuation Analyst) credential in 2015, has been taking continuing education courses to keep up with those changes in the industry.

"I enjoy the technology side of it," he said, "and being able to pick the software and set up the processes the way I want to do it is a big thing."

As of the new year, Stidd has nearly 100 clients, the majority of whom are located in the Albany-Glens Falls corridor along the Northway. Because he is able to work remotely, he also has out-of-state clients, including those from Connecticut and Florida. If all goes as planned, he will begin adding staff in the fall.

For the upcoming tax season, Stidd has a message to impart.

"The biggest thing I tell prospects or any of my current clients is, 'If you've got some kind of financial transaction coming up that you're thinking about, call your CPA and discuss it with them first before finalizing [the paperwork]. Because once you do the transaction, you can't change the tax consequences.' If you do some planning ahead of time, you may be able to save on taxes."

Since he started his own company, Stidd has been more than happy with how things have turned out and with the people he has met.

"I look at it as a partnership with my clients, and it's typically a long-term relationship," he said. "I love what I do, obviously, with my clients. I really enjoy the business side of it and being able to take something and grow it and build the business."

Stidd can be reached online at StiddCPA.com and by phone at 518-414-3242.

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The Top Ways AI Can **SUPPORT YOUR SALES**



by **Alan VanTassel**
of *Velocity Sales*

The sales department plays a crucial role in any organization's success.

As technology advances, it is vital to understand the trends in sales, including AI. Its widespread adoption has transformed almost every sector, and its application is limitless. From identifying valuable patterns for forecasting to automating follow-up emails, AI is changing the sales landscape and how salespeople interact with customers.

Let's explore the top 4 ways AI can support your sales organization:

1 Sales Forecasting

Traditionally, sales forecasting has been a time-consuming process, prone to human error, and heavily reliant on the individual salesperson's intuition and experience. However, AI is revolutionizing this process.

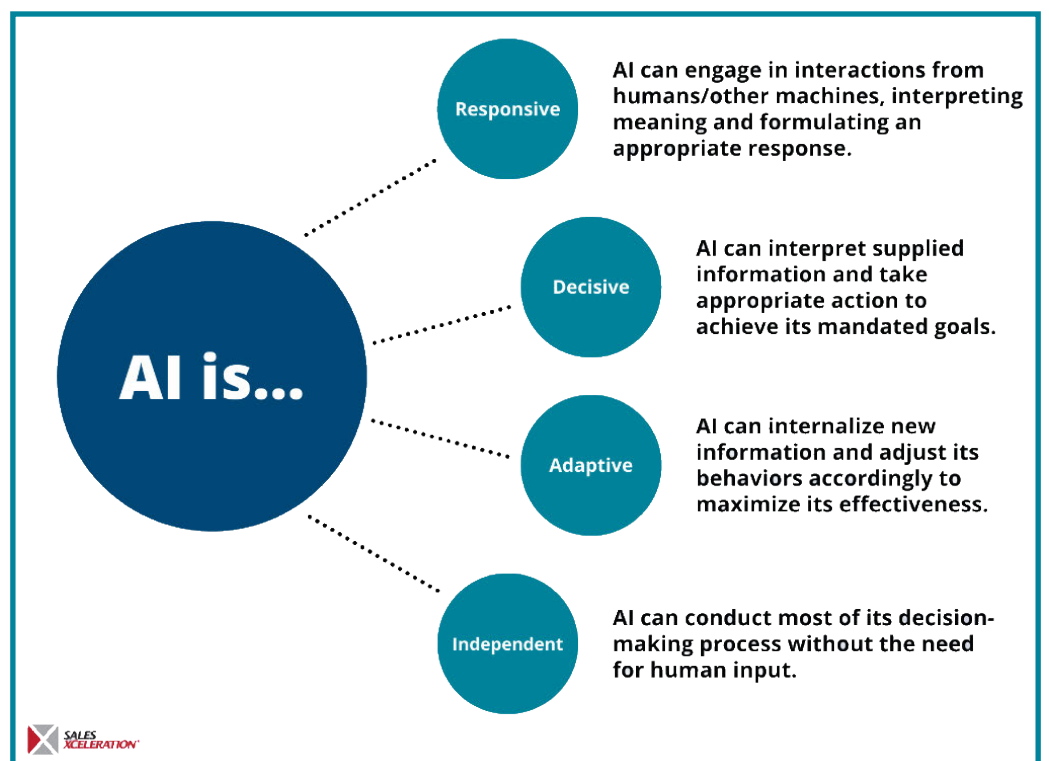
PUT IT INTO PRACTICE:

Use AI-powered software to analyze your historical sales data and ask it to identify patterns and predict future sales trends. This technology can consider factors that humans might overlook, such as seasonal variations, market trends, and even global economic indicators.

If utilized consistently, your AI-powered system will become increasingly precise, providing invaluable strategic insights for sales teams. Sales forecasting enables business owners to plan their revenue stream, budget more accurately, and forecast future growth.

2 Lead Generation & Qualification

AI software can help businesses generate leads and manage them effectively. Machine learning platforms can analyze customer data, website traffic, and social media engagement.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE:

Enable a chatbot on your website to engage with visitors and initiate lead-qualifying conversations. By asking targeted questions and gathering information about their needs, budgets, and preferences, chatbots can then identify potential high-quality leads and immediately route them to the sales team for a personal follow-up.

By utilizing AI, sales professionals can personalize their approach and spend time talking to the most high-value prospects.

3 Content Creation & Brainstorming

AI-powered content creation tools can generate creative ideas and valuable insights for prospect messaging. This not only eases the process of content development but also ensures its relevance, catering to the specific needs and preferences of the target audience.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE:

AI tools, such as ChatGPT, are excellent options to generate content based on specific guidelines. Feed your AI-powered platform with tasks, such as generating a prospect email, a response to a qualified lead, or even creating a social media post to promote your newest offering. Remember, while AI provides a significant boost, human editing is still necessary to maintain the brand's voice and ensure the content's overall coherence and quality.

4 Competitor Analysis

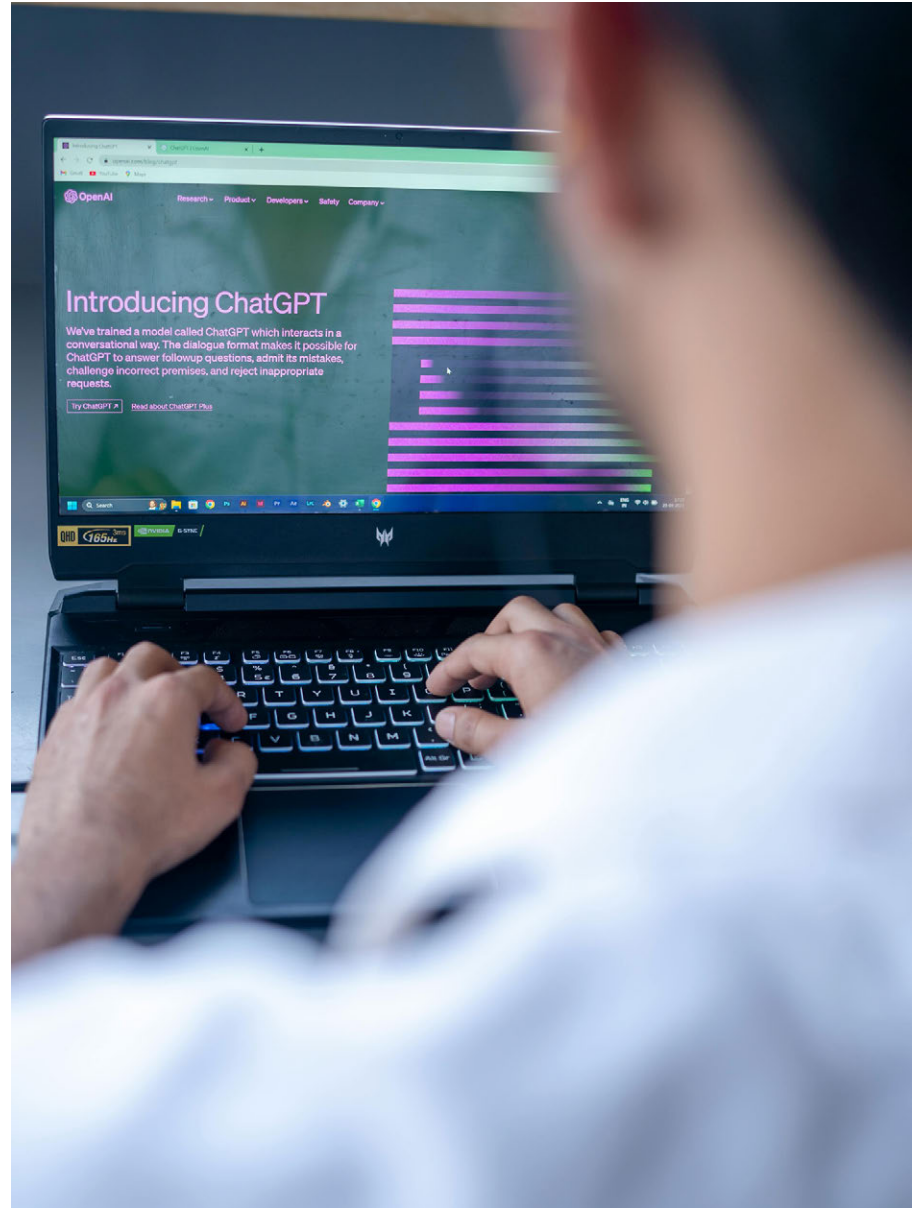
AI can provide real-time competitor analysis, giving businesses a leg-up concerning competition. AI software can monitor competitor activity, such as price changes, new product launches, and promotional activities.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE:

Begin searching for relevant data to answer questions about competitor products, pricing, and marketing positioning. Such questions could include "What is the value proposition of Company X?" "What is Company X's target market or service offering?" Using the data compiled can help businesses formulate a better sales strategy and alert sales reps of any changes in the competitive landscape.

The Bottom Line:

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the sales industry and providing endless possibilities for businesses to optimize their sales organization. Yet, in a recent poll we conducted, 35% of Small to Mid-Size Businesses were not implementing this revolutionary technology to streamline their sales processes.



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SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 47

Ownership vs. Management - Dimitri's Story

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Dimitri Skrinik, the Project Manager at MODS National! Dimitri's had an exciting journey, between emigrating from Moldova, leveraging internships into running his own blue collar business... And then leaving it to manage construction projects using shipping containers! Why did he choose Project Management over business ownership? What have his experiences taught him? Hear the answers, his story, and more here, in this episode!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 46

Advocating for the Trades - AGC NYS

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Brendan Manning, the Vice President of Education & Environment at AGC New York! The AGC (Associated General Contractors) specializes in discovering and solving the problems caused by federal and state legislation that pertain to the trades, and informing and working with local tradespeople based on that information. Whether it's by focusing on the legal side, directly training local business owners, or partnering with local organizations, the AGC is a fantastic Blue Collar advocate!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 45

Revolutionizing Workforce Development with BoomNation

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Brent Flavin and David Johnson, co-founder & CEO, and Sales VP respectively of BoomNation! Finding workers and finding work - that's the biggest challenge the trades are facing. BoomNation breaks through the drawbacks of job boards, combining effective professional services with a fun and personal user experience. If you breathe Blue and want to work Blue, BoomNation is your solution!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 44

Fabricating the Future

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Terrence Musto and Robert Manasier - the creator of Fabbro Industries, and the business mentor that helped him do it! From a humble start building custom bikes to running his own professional fabrication shop, Terrence's business is a stunning example of the kind of value a business mentor like Robert can provide. Want to learn how to take that idea of yours to the next level? Listen to this episode to get a few clues!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 43

Breaking the Blue Collar Stigma with Curtis Lumber

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Doug Ford and Pam Stott, two employees of Curtis Lumber who specialize in workforce development! It's all anyone can talk about now: "Where are all the young workers?" "What will happen to the trades in ten years?" If Doug and Pam have anything to say about it, things will only get better - they're dedicated to educating people across the state about their options, and the wonderful truths about Blue Collar work - it's not "a backup job", it's skilled, profitable, fulfilling, and essential!

LISTEN ON



BUYING LOCAL



Saratoga, Warren, and Washington County have no shortage of fantastic goods and services to offer! In this podcast, our host Mike Nelson will clue you in on the amazing gems hidden in your very own community!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 51

Leave Your Company & Start Your Own: The Five Towers Story

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Brad Colacino, his partner at – and co-owner of – Five Towers Media! Brad had a stable, cushy job at a big white collar company, but he decided to leave it all behind to start his own business! Has he achieved the success he sought? What does he love about his current company? Find out the answers in this special first episode of our second season!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 50

Improving the Community with The Town Tinker

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Scott Lufkin, Argyle native and star of The Town Tinker! The Town Tinker is all about taking on cool projects, but not just for himself – whether it's restoring tombstones and church bells, clearing sidewalks, or crowdsourcing a new town skating rink, Scott is community-first, making his native Argyle a better place for everyone.



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 49

Building Better Culture with Tom Schin

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Tom Schin, the man behind the important consulting business of Build Better Culture! Every organization thinks they have a great workplace culture – but not all of them actually do! Tom knows the secrets to employee satisfaction and retention... But you might be surprised by how inherent they are!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 48

Riding the Rails of Progress with Stimler Advantage

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Neal Stimler, the President of Stimler Advantage! Technology development has accelerated by leaps and bounds in recent years, and keeping up with it can be an overwhelming task... But Stimler Advantage has all the know-how to catch you and your business up with the times – making your processes efficient, and keeping your strategy tightly focused!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPISODE 47

The Two Key Words – Experience, and Teamwork

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Kris Brunelle, owner and CEO of White Glove Janitorial Service! He may be the executive at the helm, but Kris still does cleaning, team-building and managing along with his salesmanship duties. The key words to his success? Experience, and Teamwork! How have these things helped his small startup thrive this past year? You'll have to listen to this episode to find out!

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