Title

How ChatGPT is More Like Bart Simpson than Credit Unions (Filene Blog Post)

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4wz5x7vx

Author

Maurer, Bill

Publication Date

2023-02-21

BLOG POST | Feb 21, 2023

How ChatGPT is More Like Bart Simpson than Credit Unions

ChatGPT is the latest AI technology taking the financial industry by storm. For credit unions who differentiate themselves through their strong network of partners and members, can this tool be used to leverage those relationships?

Bill Maurer
Dean, School of Social Sciences; Professor, Department of Anthropology and School of Law; Director, Institute for Money, Technology and Financial Inclusion at University of California, Irvine

ChatGPT, write me an essay

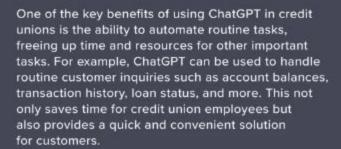I asked Chat GPT to write me a 700 word essay on the use of ChatGPT for credit unions.

FRI

Write a 700 word essay on
the use of ChatGPT for credit unions

The use of advanced AI technology such as OpenAI's ChatGPT in credit unions has the potential to revolutionize the way they interact with their customers. Credit unions, as non-profit financial institutions, aim to provide personalized financial services to their members, and the use of AI-powered chatbots such as ChatGPT can help them achieve this goal in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

One of the key benefits of using ChatGPT in credit unions is the ability to automate routine tasks, freeing up time and resources for other important tasks. For example, ChatGPT can be used to handle routine customer inquiries such as account balances, transaction history, loan status, and more. This not only saves time for credit union employees but also provides a quick and convenient solution for customers.

Another advantage of using ChatGPT in credit unions is the ability to provide 24/7 customer service. With the chatbot available to answer questions at any time, customers can get the information they need quickly and easily, without having to wait for the credit union to open during business hours. This can lead to improved customer satisfaction and increased customer loyalty, as customers appreciate the convenience and accessibility of the service.

Additionally, ChatGPT can be trained to recognize the specific language and terminology used by credit unions, allowing it to respond to inquiries with accuracy and precision. This helps to minimize errors and ensures that customers receive accurate and relevant information, further improving their experience.

Moreover, ChatGPT can be integrated with existing systems and data sources, such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, to provide a more seamless and integrated customer experience. This allows the chatbot to access customer information in real-time and provide personalized responses to each customer, based on their unique needs and preferences.

In addition to its customer-facing applications, ChatGPT can also be used in a variety of internal processes within credit unions. For example, it can be used to automate routine tasks such as data entry, customer service tickets, and loan processing. This can help to streamline processes, improve efficiency, and reduce the risk of human error.

Another potential use for ChatGPT in credit unions is in the area of financial education and advice. The chatbot can be programmed to provide educational resources and financial advice to customers, helping them to make informed financial decisions and manage their finances effectively. This can help to build customer trust and increase customer engagement, further strengthening the relationship between the credit union and its members.

Despite these benefits, the use of ChatGPT in credit unions also raises some potential challenges and concerns. One of these is the potential loss of personal touch and human interaction in the customer experience. While the chatbot can handle routine inquiries and provide basic information, it may not be able to provide the same level of empathy and understanding as a human customer service representative.

Another potential challenge is the potential for customer confusion and misinformation. If the chatbot is not programmed or trained properly, it may provide incorrect or misleading information, which can harm the credit union's reputation and customer trust.

Additionally, there is a concern about job displacement as the use of chatbots like ChatGPT becomes more widespread. The automation of routine tasks may lead to job losses for employees who previously performed those tasks, and credit unions need to ensure that their employees are equipped with the skills and training needed to adapt to the changing landscape of financial services.

Despite these challenges, the use of ChatGPT in credit unions represents a significant opportunity for credit unions to improve their customer service, increase efficiency, and provide valuable financial education and advice to their members. With proper planning, implementation, and training, credit unions can leverage the power of AI technology to drive positive outcomes for their members and their organization as a whole.

In conclusion, the use of ChatGPT in credit unions has the potential to bring about significant benefits, including improved customer service, increased efficiency, and more personalized financial advice. However, credit unions must also be mindful of the potential challenges and work to minimize them through proper planning and implementation. The use of AI technology, such as ChatGPT, represents an exciting opportunity for credit unions to enhance their operations and better serve their members.

When I was asked to write something about ChatGPT in relation to credit unions, naturally, I created an account with OpenAI, the company that developed this so-called generative AI tool, and entered the query: "Write me a 700 word essay on the use of ChatGPT for credit unions." The results, which are reproduced on the right, were pretty uncanny, and pretty darn good.

CHATGPT, WRITE ME AN ESSAY

At the same time there were a few "tells" that got me wondering about the algorithms driving the system, and how the nature of my query ("write me an essay…") led the system down a particular path. So I entered another query of the same form: "Write me a 500 word essay on alternative currencies in the style of Bill Maurer." (Although the system generates a reply pretty instantaneously, I was too impatient for a lengthier response this time). Again, those tells. First, the identification of the subject or target with a clause separated by a comma explaining what or who that subject or target is ("credit unions, as non-profit financial institutions,…" "As a scholar in the field of anthropology and economics, I…"). Second, the classic essay format, with a thesis statement in an opening paragraph, a list of key benefits (six, in the credit union case), a "despite these" or "however" transition paragraph to a list of potential downsides or harms (three, as you'll see below), and then a "we can overcome" paragraph before a rosy conclusion, opening with, of course, "In conclusion…".

> "ChatGPT mostly relates perfectly plausible content, but, again, replicating a very unimaginative form. Which perhaps is just fine for an AI. But what about for credit unions?"

Just like Bart Simpson in that classic episode of The Simpsons, caught unprepared in class one day for an oral presentation on a foreign country, ChatGPT follows cookie-cutter conventions to produce good, but not stunning, results. Think of ChatGPT as a "blurry" JPEG of the web, which means it will get the general gist of a query right, but important details could well be wrong. Sometimes the algorithm simply makes things up entirely. Bart made up the content for his presentation, but the hilarity in that scene came from his near-perfect replication of the form. ChatGPT mostly relates perfectly plausible content, but, again, replicating a very unimaginative form. Which perhaps is just fine for an AI. But what about for credit unions?

The tech oracles are receiving messages from the future about ChatGPT with an intensity we have not seen since, oh, I don't know, the Segway was introduced. ChatGPT will: make Google obsolete, make writers obsolete, utterly transform education, displace programmers, replace workers, supercharge workers. For financial services, it will finally automate everything in the back office, make intranet data usable and valuable, provide financial advice, automate the onboarding of new employees (if there are any left!) as well as new members, and so on. And I do not doubt that some financial institutions will find ways of using it or similar tech to do such things.

But what about credit unions?

The formulaic responses of ChatGPT should make us pause. Tools like ChatGPT are perfectly suited to formulaic processes in a mediocre to OK sort of way (*only* the 52nd percentile on the SAT?). Like banks, credit unions have plenty of those processes, which can likely be assisted by a tool like ChatGPT. But that's not where credit unions' value proposition to their members resides. My bet is that services like ChatGPT will better serve big banks with anonymous (and dehumanized and dehumanizing!) customer service than high-touch credit unions that know and care deeply about their members.

In a widely circulated LinkedIn post, Chris Nichols at SouthState Bank includes an example of an email to a prospective vendor generated by ChatGPT:

FRI Write an email to this vendor for their introductory email and let them know that while we don't have a need right now, we will get back to them in the future when a need arises.

Subject: Thank you for your introduction

Dear [Vendor Name],

Thank you for reaching out to us and introducing your company's services and products. We appreciate the time and effort you took to share this information with us.

At the moment, we don't have any specific need that aligns with the services you offer, however, we would like to keep your contact information on file for future reference. We will definitely get back to you in the future when the need arises.

We are impressed with the range of services and products that you offer and believe that you could be a valuable asset to our future projects. We look forward to the possibility of working together in the future.

Please let us know if there is anything else we can assist you with or if you have any updates on your services that we should be aware of.

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Company]

What human is going to be fooled into thinking that this was written by an actual person who gives a damn?

The Credit Union Contrast

For a bank's relationship with a third-party vendor, that might be fine. For a credit union with its own network of partners, not to mention its members, this won't cut it, not if the credit union wants to maintain if not deepen the kind of relationships that foster trust and the confidence that the credit union truly knows its partners and its members.

At one level, ChatGPT is way more sophisticated than my favorite chatbot, MSFCU's Fran. But I bet Fran "knows" a whole lot more about MSFCU's members than ChatGPT ever will. This is because one-size-fits-all rarely works in the credit union world, where each credit union serves a distinct field of membership linked by a common bond—even if, increasingly for some credit unions, it's become harder and harder to tell the difference with a big bank. That should only make us try harder, though, and really promote—and really demonstrate—credit unions' unique model and value.

> " ChatGPT provides an opportunity once again for credit unions to remember their key differences from banks, and to act on those differences. "

ChatGPT provides an opportunity once again for credit unions to remember their key differences from banks, and to act on those differences. As ChatGPT reminds us, credit unions are nonprofit financial institutions, cooperatives, in fact (which ChatGPT seems not to have noticed), with members, not customers (which ChatGPT only realized at the very end of its essay). They have a "people helping people" mission. To quote Bart Simpson, credit unions provide "a land of contrasts" from banks—or, at least, they should.

Utilizing ChatGPT

In conclusion: ask yourself, what are you hoping to do with a tool like ChatGPT? Find efficiencies in routine processes? Play around with it, and see what it can do? Know your members? Maybe it will provide better data insights than your current systems? But be careful—it might not. It might return results at a general level of abstraction that will seem perfectly plausible but ultimately useless—unless you're interested in treating your members like a big bank. Build trust? I doubt it. Unless you demonstrate that your use of such a service is meaningfully different from what a bank or fintech will do, and in doing so, you show your members that you're not just jumping into the latest hype cycle, and instead always putting their interests first.