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Your monthly newsletter, written for humans not geeks

TECHNOLOGY INSIDER



The AI tools **you don't know your team is using**

You've probably got a decent handle on the software your business runs on.

Your email, your accounting package, your CRM. Someone picked those, set them up properly, and keeps an eye on them. That's how it normally works.

But AI is throwing a spanner in the works.

Research shows how many AI tools people are using at work without IT knowing a thing about it. And this isn't just about someone opening ChatGPT in a spare tab. AI is popping up inside browser extensions, apps... all sorts of everyday tools.

Someone sees something that says it'll summarise a document, take notes in a meeting, or handle some tedious task, and they install it.

Most of the time that's harmless. Sometimes it's a nice little win. But when nobody stops to check what the tool can see, or where the information goes once it's touched it, we have a problem.

A good example: Someone installs an AI browser extension to get through their inbox faster. To do that job, it usually needs permission to read what's happening in the browser. Or someone connects an AI tool to their cloud storage so it can search through documents and answer questions.

Have a proper look at those permissions.

Some of these tools can read what's on a device and send data out to the internet at the same time. Others inherit whatever access the person already has, which can hand the tool far more of your company's information than anyone meant to give away.

You can see how it happens. Someone finds something useful, clicks install, and gets back to work.

Banning AI outright isn't the solution though. People use the tools because they make the day easier, and that isn't going to change.

It's better to know what's being used.

Once you do, you can work out what you're comfortable with, point people toward safer tools, and set a few simple rules about what can be shared with AI and what can't.

If you'd like a clearer picture of what's already running inside your business, get in touch.

DID YOU KNOW...

Chrome will update twice as often as before?

Google Chrome will now get major updates every two weeks. That's twice as frequently as before.

AI-powered tools are helping researchers discover more security vulnerabilities, creating more fixes for Google to release. The faster schedule means those security updates can reach your browser sooner.

Another good reason to keep Chrome updated.

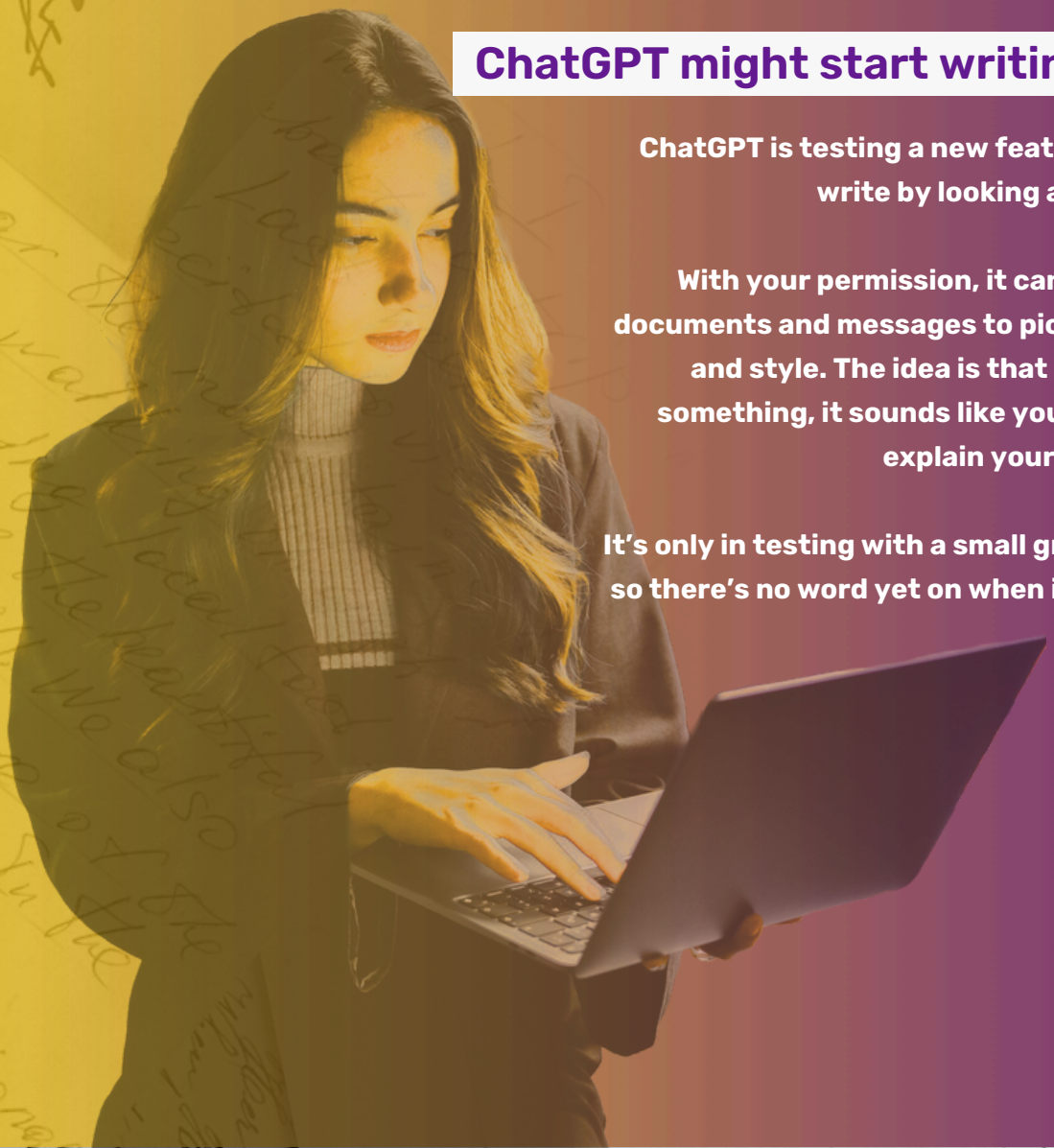
TechFacts

1. Researchers in Australia are turning cockroaches into tiny rescue workers. The insects have been fitted with lightweight electronics, tiny cameras, and even a device that can deliver an injection. The idea is that they could scuttle through gaps in collapsed buildings or caves that human rescuers simply can't reach, hunting for survivors. And it's not just theory. Tests have already shown they can navigate toward a target and deliver their payload.

2. Scientists have created the first complete map of an adult fruit fly's brain and central nervous system, covering more than 166,000 neurons. Then, because apparently that wasn't enough, software engineers started training the virtual fly brain to play Doom and Super Mario 64. There's an unwritten rule in tech: If something can possibly be made to play Super Mario, somebody will eventually try.

3. In 1947, engineers working on the Harvard Mark II computer found a moth trapped inside one of its relays. They taped the unlucky insect into their logbook next to the words: "First actual case of bug being found." The word "bug" was already being used for technical problems by then, so the moth didn't give us the term. But it did give computing history its most famous literal bug.

Technology update



ChatGPT might start writing like you do...

ChatGPT is testing a new feature that learns how you write by looking at your connected apps.

With your permission, it can reference your emails, documents and messages to pick up on your usual tone and style. The idea is that when you ask it to draft something, it sounds like you, without you having to explain your style every single time.

It's only in testing with a small group of users right now, so there's no word yet on when it'll roll out more widely.

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"If you are not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you've launched too late."

Reid Hoffman,
co-founder of LinkedIn.

Byte-sized brain teasers **it's November's Tech Quiz...**

1. What year was the first iPhone released?
2. Which company owns the photo-sharing app Instagram?
3. What does "IoT," a term you might see on smart home gadgets, stand for?
4. What gaming console, released in the mid-2000s, was the first to make motion controls popular with everyday families?
5. What does the file format "PDF" stand for?

The answers are below.

1. 2007
2. Meta (formerly Facebook)
3. Internet of Things
4. Nintendo Wii
5. Portable Document Format

NEW TO

MICROSOFT



Excel has a new trick...

Microsoft is adding an AI-powered Canvas to Excel that turns your spreadsheet data into an interactive dashboard.

Copilot pulls the important figures, charts and insights together into one view you can immediately make sense of. Even better, it stays connected to your spreadsheet, so it updates itself as the numbers change. No more rebuilding the dashboard every time something moves.

You can even just ask Copilot to change it for you by typing what you want, which could make even the most intimidating spreadsheets a lot friendlier to look at.

Could AI make **your managers more productive?**

How much of your managers' time goes on managing people?

Less than you'd like, probably.

There's work to hand out, progress to check, meetings to arrange, questions to answer, and a stack of admin all fighting for their attention.

But this research has raised an interesting question: Could AI take some of that off their plate?

Employees were asked how they'd feel about having an AI manager, and a fair number thought it would make them more productive.

It's not hard to see why. AI can keep track of tasks, chase deadlines, answer the routine questions, and pull up information as soon as someone needs it. But none of that requires it to replace the person running the team.

For you, it could mean your managers get more time for the stuff where their experience and judgement is more valuable.

The research also showed where people still want a human in the room.

Performance feedback was a good example. When someone needs to hear how they're doing, talk through a problem, or figure out where they want to grow, a real conversation wins every time.

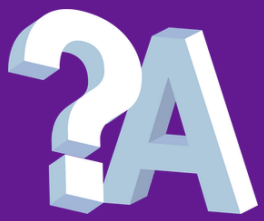
Same goes for encouragement, coaching, and picking up on what's going on with someone beyond whatever's on a screen.

There's a real opportunity here.

Let AI take on more of the routine, day-to-day management, and your managers get to spend their time supporting their people, making decisions, and keeping things moving.

Beats having an AI boss, doesn't it?.

If you'd like to explore practical ways AI could save time across your business, get in touch.



Q: How can I see if we're paying for software nobody uses?

A: A software review can compare the licenses you're paying for with what your team uses. It's worth doing regularly, particularly as people join, leave or change roles.

Q: Should employees be allowed to install their own browser extensions?

A: Have some controls in place. Browser extensions may access information you're viewing or entering online, so they can introduce security and privacy risks.

Q: How do I know if our tech is hindering productivity?

A: Look out for friction. Slow systems, repeated manual work, too many logins and employees regularly finding workarounds may suggest your tech is getting in the way.

Productivity tool of the month

Stop doing the boring bits yourself

Ever feel like you spend too much time on little computer jobs that should just… do themselves?

That's what Microsoft's Power Automate is for.

Give it repetitive jobs like saving email attachments, organising files, copying information between systems, or pulling together regular reports, and it'll just get on with them.

You don't need to know how to code, and there's a good chance it's already sitting on your Windows 11 Pro PC, ready to go. Find the right jobs to hand over and you could give yourself and your team hours back every month.

Free with Windows 11 Pro and most Microsoft 365 business plans.



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