



OPINION: MY DAY OF RECKONING — HOW AI WON ME OVER - INSIDE SOURCES

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I have gone over. All the way. I have fallen in love with artificial intelligence. We need it and I'm on board.

My conversion was sudden. It happened on one memorable day, Feb. 8, 2023. It was a sudden strike in a well-worn heart by Cupid's arrow.

My love life with technology has been either unrequited or messy. I was always the one who blew the relationship, I admit that.

It started with computer typesetting. I was a committed hot type man. I didn't want to see that painted lady, computer technology, destroying my divine relationship with hot type. But she did and when I tried to make amends she was, er, cold, froze me out.

Likewise, as an old-time newspaperman, I was very proficient and happy with Telex. Computer technology separated us.

The worst of all was my first encounter with the internet.

I was pursuing the story of nuclear fusion at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. A lab technician tried to interest me in the new device he was using to send messages: The internet. I blew it off. "That is just Telex on steroids," I said.

Ms. Internet doesn't care to be scorned and she nearly cost me my manhood — well, my publishing company — when she took her terrible revenge. She killed print papers as well as hot type. She was a vengeful siren that way.

My conversion to AI began innocently enough. I was listening to a reporter on National Public Radio explaining how Microsoft's new AI search engine would not only change the world of online searching but would also give Google a serious run for its money — billions of dollars, I might say parenthetically.

The writing's on the wall for Google unless it can get its AI to market fast. I was intrigued.

The illustration used by NPR reporter Bobby Allyn was that of buying a couch and carrying it home in your car. The new search engine, Allyn explained, will tell you if the couch you want to buy will fit in your car. It will know the dimensions of the car and, maybe, of the couch, too. Wow!

Then I went on to watch a wild, unruly hearing before the House Oversight Committee. A long-suffering panel of former Twitter executives

faced some pointed abuse from the Republican members. Some of those members never got to pose a question: Their time was entirely taken up castigating the witnesses over alleged collusion with the Biden administration and over Hunter Biden's laptop — the holy grail for conspiracy theorists. It was a performance worthy of a Soviet show trial.

The worst aspects of the new House were on display. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) was visibly flustered because she wasn't in her seat when her time to question the witnesses arrived. She rushed back to it and was so excited that she was nearly incoherent.

Then there was Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) who was adamant that Twitter was advancing a political agenda by accepting the science that vaccines helped control the Covid-19 outbreak. She claimed Twitter had a political objective when it denied her free speech rights by suspending her account, after frequent warnings about her dangerous public health positions opposing vaccinations.

The lady's not for turning. Not by facts, anyway. That was clear. Any Southern charm she may possess was shelved in favor of invective. She told the former Twitter executives that she was glad they had been fired.

The clincher in my conversion to AI had nothing to do with the brutal thrashing of the experts, but with the explanation by Yoel Roth, former head of Trust and Safety at Twitter, who with forbearance explained that there were then and are now hundreds of Russian false accounts on Twitter aimed at influencing our elections and reaching deeply into our politics. Likewise, Iranian and Chinese accounts.

That is when it occurred to me: AI is the answer. Not the answer to the mannerless ways of the House hearing, but to the whole vulnerability of social media.

We have to fight cyber excess with cyber: Only AI can deal with the volumes of malicious domestic and foreign material on the net. Too bad it won't resolve the free speech issues, or the one that emerged at the House hearing: the right to lie without restraint.

This AI doubter is now an enthusiast. Bring it on.