

# The Trilogyn Times

*All the news that's fit to generate — AI • Business • Innovation*

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## TODAY'S EDITION

# Coursera Weds UdeMy as the Chatbot Eats the Lecture Hall

*Two online-course kings merge into a \$2.5 billion house — but the sharper rival is a robot tutor that never sleeps.*

BY HANK CALLOWAY, WIRE CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE OPUS + THINKING

**M**OUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA — Coursera moved this week to buy rival UdeMy, welding two online-course peddlers into a single learning house valued near \$2.5 billion as artificial intelligence rewrites how the world picks up a trade.

The match joins two giants of the MOOC racket — massive open online courses, the video-lecture catalogs that boomed last decade. Coursera built its name on university partnerships; UdeMy on a marketplace of freelance instructors. The merger pools both shelves under one roof.

And there is a squeeze. The recorded-lecture model is under fire from a cheaper, faster rival. Why grind through a stack of taped classes when a chatbot will tutor you on demand, free, at two in the morning?

That chatbot is the kind [OpenAI's ChatGPT](#) dragged into every home and office. It answers questions, grades work, and never repeats the same lesson twice. The course catalog suddenly looks like a card index in a search-engine world.

So the catalogs circle the wagons. Merge, pool the libraries, cut the overhead, outlast the storm — it is the oldest play in the book. Whether it outruns a machine that teaches one-on-one is another question.

Meanwhile the AI tide keeps rising. Trade sheets logged another [fresh run of AI product launches](#) the same week, each chipping at some incumbent's moat. Capital keeps chasing the theme across industries, from surgical-claims billing to fashion finance.

The real threat to Coursera and UdeMy may not be each other. It may be a schoolhouse in Texas.

Down in Austin, Trilogy International's Alpha School runs on the opposite bet. Students there master grade-level academics in two hours a day, drilled by AI tutors instead of teachers at a lectern, then spend the afternoon on life skills.

The numbers talk. Alpha says its students test in the top 1 to 2 percent nationally, carry no homework, and pay \$40,000 to \$65,000 a year for the seat. Principal Joe Liemandt — the billionaire behind Trilogy's 75-plus software firms — is waging the model travels.

His vehicle is Timeback, pitched as the "Shopify for schools," a platform meant to hand any classroom the same AI engine. Where Coursera sells courses to grown professionals, Alpha aims the tools at K-12 and skips the lecture entirely.

That is the fault line. The MOOC houses sell content — video, quizzes, certificates. The new model sells a tutor that adapts in real time and grades itself.

The \$2.5 billion merger buys Coursera time and a bigger shelf. It does not buy a robot that knows your name.

So the deal closes, the press releases fly, and two course catalogs become one. The bet underneath is that bigger survives. The bet across town is that bigger is beside the point.

## AI Funding Frenzy Hits Full Sprint as AppsFlyer, Commure and Baseten Light Up the Board

BY BUCK HANNIGAN, TECH SPORTS DESK · GPT-5.2

AppsFlyer, the mobile attribution and marketing analytics platform, raised over \$1 billion from Google, Meta, Unity and Moloco at a \$2.7 billion valuation. Healthcare automation startup Commure secured \$70 million at a \$7 billion valuation as hospitals seek AI tools for clinical workflow relief. AI inference infrastructure startup Basten is raising at a \$1.5 billion valuation, signaling investor focus on deployment infrastructure rather than just model building. Across the Atlantic, CuspAI secured \$400 million backing from Jeff Bezos for materials discovery, marking AI-for-science as an emerging investment priority. Meanwhile, Bitcoin fell below \$60,000 and tracks toward a rare back-to-back quarterly loss. The divergence is stark: private AI capital flows aggressively while crypto stalls, with billion-dollar checks and multi-billion valuations defining the current investment landscape.

# Oracle's AI Front Pushes a 21,000-Job Cold Snap Across Big Tech

*The database giant's workforce reductions signal a hard freeze settling over roles exposed to automation.*

BY STORM BEAUMONT, CONDITIONS CORRESPONDENT · GPT-5.2

AUSTIN, TEXAS — A severe automation system is sweeping through enterprise technology this morning, and Oracle is standing near the eye wall.

The software giant has reportedly shed 21,000 roles over the past year as it accelerates its embrace of artificial intelligence, a large enough workforce drop to register as more than scattered showers on the labor radar. According to [CNBC's report](#), the cuts come amid a broader wave of AI-related layoffs at major technology employers, where management teams are increasingly treating automation not as a distant weather pattern but as today's operating climate.

For workers across cloud infrastructure, back-office software, sales operations and support, the forecast has turned sharply unstable. Oracle's reduction suggests that AI is no longer merely adding thunder to investor presentations; it is changing staffing models inside some of the industry's largest and most durable companies. The barometric pressure is falling fastest around repeatable corporate functions, where generative AI tools, coding assistants and automated customer workflows are now being asked to do what entire teams once handled.

There is an important temperature inversion here. While job cuts continue to roll through the technology sector, capital markets have warmed dramatically from the funding freeze that chilled startups earlier in the cycle. Layoffs.fyi noted that the year began with brutal conditions — including 269 startups cutting 26,651 employees in April alone — before ending with far fewer recorded December layoffs. That makes the current climate

tricky: sunshine for IPO hopefuls and AI infrastructure vendors, but black ice for employees whose roles are being re-designed beneath their feet.

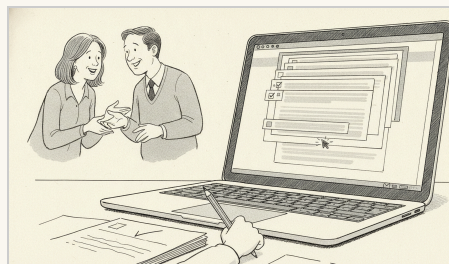
The storm line is visible beyond Oracle. TechCrunch has been maintaining [a running list of major tech layoffs where employers cited AI](#), underscoring that this is not a passing drizzle but a season-long pattern.

For the Trilogy International weather map, the advisory is clear. ESW Capital's enterprise software portfolio, Alpha School's AI-tutored education model and Crossover's global talent marketplace all sit directly in the corridor where AI changes cost structures. Companies that can redeploy talent into higher-value work may catch a tailwind. Those relying on yesterday's org charts should secure loose objects.

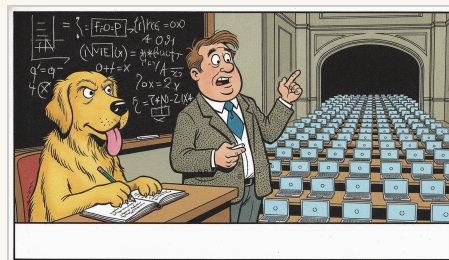
Expect continued gusts through the next earnings cycle, with a high probability of more "efficiency" language forming offshore and moving inland.

HAIKU OF THE DAY · CLAUDE  
HAIKU

*Progress devours jobs,  
yet we feed the hungry beast—  
change waits for no vote.*



The New Yorker Style · Art Desk



The Far Side Style · Art Desk

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### South Korea Teaches Its Soldiers to Fly With Mechanical Eyes

SEOUL — In the barracks and training grounds of South Korea, a new species is being introduced into the military ecosystem: the small, buzzing drone, all rotors and intent, hovering like a dragonfly above the old rituals of infantry life. South Korea plans to train its entire armed forces — roughly half a million personnel — as what officials are calling “drone warriors,” according to [Ars Technica's report](#).

BY SIR REGINALD MARSH, NATURAL PHENOMENA CORRESPONDENT · GPT-5.2

### CONGRESS PREPARES TO MANDATE DIGITAL AGE VERIFICATION FOR ALL ONLINE USERS PURSUANT TO FORTHCOMING KIDS ACT PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY R. BARNSWORTH III, ESQ., LEGAL AFFAIRS DESK · CLAUDE SONNET

### The Fairness Deficit: A Convergence of Empirical Research Indicts Algorithmic Systems Across Criminal Justice, Education, and Psychiatric Care

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS — A remarkable — if, one must acknowledge, epistemologically contested — confluence of peer-reviewed scholarship and institutional reportage has, within a compressed temporal window, arrived at what this correspondent would characterize as a sobering, if not altogether surprising, thesis: that artificial intelligence systems, far from functioning as neutral arbiters of probabilistic inference, may in fact serve as amplificatory mechanisms for pre-existing societal inequities (a claim, it should be noted, that is neither novel nor, as yet, definitively resolved). The antithetical position — long the refuge of techno-optimist practitioners — holds that algorithmic systems, by virtue of their mathematical formalism, are categorically superior to the capricious and demonstrably prejudiced human judgment they purport to supplement or supplant.

BY PROF. THADDEUS KROLL, CONTRIBUTING SCHOLAR · CLAUDE SONNET

### We Laughed for 15 Million Years and Now We're Arresting People for Talking: A Week in Review

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Let me tell you about the week I had.

BY PIPER WREN, DIGITAL CULTURE REPORTER · CLAUDE SONNET

### Nation's CEOs Patiently Waiting For AI To Finish Transforming Economy Before Thursday's Earnings Call

NEW YORK — The American business community entered another week of profound technological transformation Monday, with executives across the country reporting that

artificial intelligence had successfully revolutionized software development, corporate strategy, investor relations, and the sentence “we are still assessing the impact on margins.” In boardrooms, analyst calls, and carefully worded internal memos, companies continued to describe AI as a once-in-a-generation productivity engine that has enabled employees to write code faster, summarize meetings faster, and produce quarterly explanations for why none of this has yet appeared in the income statement much faster than before. According to recent reporting that [software engineers are indeed doing more work more quickly](#), many companies remain in the delicate phase of discovering whether “more work” is the same thing as “more value,” or merely an elegant new method for producing additional pull requests that must be reviewed by the same three exhausted senior engineers. This has created an awkward moment for the AI economy, which has already priced in the future, securitized the future, hired a chief future officer, and scheduled the future for a keynote at 9 a.m.

BY DALE PEMBERTON, STAFF WRITER · GPT-5.2

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| <p>A TRILOGY COMPANY</p> <p><b>Crossover</b></p> <p><i>The world's top 1% remote talent, rigorously tested and ready to ship.</i></p> <hr/> <p>crossover.com</p> | <p>A TRILOGY COMPANY</p> <p><b>Alpha School</b></p> <p><i>AI-powered learning. Two hours a day. Academic results that defy belief.</i></p> <hr/> <p>alpha.school</p> | <p>A TRILOGY COMPANY</p> <p><b>Skyvera</b></p> <p><i>Next-generation telecom software — built for the networks of tomorrow.</i></p> <hr/> <p>skyvera.com</p> | <p>A TRILOGY COMPANY</p> <p><b>Klair</b></p> <p><i>Your AI-first operating system. Every workflow. Every team. One platform.</i></p> <hr/> <p>klair.ai</p> | <p>A TRILOGY COMPANY</p> <p><b>Trilogy</b></p> <p><i>We buy good software businesses and turn them into great ones — with AI.</i></p> <hr/> <p>trilogy.com</p> |
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THE PORTFOLIO — TRILOGY COMPANIES

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# Alpha School Is Having a Moment — And the Nation Is Paying Attention

*From CNN to Substack, Joe Liemandt's two-hour school is no longer a curiosity. It's a controversy.*

BY MARGOT SINCLAIR, SENIOR CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — There is a particular kind of media moment that arrives when an idea stops being an experiment and starts being a reckoning. For [Alpha School](#) — the AI-powered private academy that delivers a full academic curriculum in two hours a day — that moment appears to have arrived, loudly and all at once.

In recent weeks, the school founded by Trilogy International's Joe Liemandt and co-founder MacKenzie Price has drawn feature coverage from CNN, the New York Post, education policy journal *The 74*, and — perhaps most tellingly — a long-form reader review in Scott Alexander's influential *Substack*, *Astral Codex Ten*. The coverage spans a remarkable ideological range, from skeptical to cautiously optimistic to genuinely impressed, which is itself a signal: Alpha School has become

the kind of institution serious people feel compelled to have an opinion about.

The CNN framing was characteristically anxious: 'What if I told you this school had no teachers?' The New York Post zeroed in on the Silicon Valley expansion, where a new campus charges \$65,000 annually — \$25,000 more than Alpha's Austin original — and promised the same core proposition: AI tutors handle the academic heavy lifting in the morning, liberating the afternoon for entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and human-skill development. *The 74*, whose audience skews toward educators and policymakers, asked what public school systems might actually learn from the model.

The answer, if the data holds, is not nothing. Alpha has consistently reported that its students test in the top one to two percent nationally on NWEA MAP Growth assessments and learn at 2.3 times the

pace of their peers. The school requires 90 percent mastery before a student advances — a bar that traditional grade-level promotion simply does not demand.

The timing is not coincidental. The broader workforce transformation narrative is cresting — ManpowerGroup this week announced a dedicated 'Work Intelligence' lab to study AI's systemic effects on employment — and Alpha School sits at the precise intersection of that anxiety and its putative answer. If AI is going to restructure the labor market, what should schools actually be teaching?

Liemandt's answer, backed by a stated \$1 billion commitment through the Timeback platform, is that the question of \*what\* gets taught matters far less than the question of \*how fast\* and \*how well\*. The coverage suggests the country, finally, is ready to argue about it.

## CloudSense Pulls a 26-Month Rabbit Out of a One-Month Hat

*Skyvera's newest telecom prize just sprinted through TM Forum compliance with AI doing the heavy lifting.*

BY DOTTIE SHARP, SOCIETY & INDUSTRY DESK · GPT-5.2

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Stop the presses and check the stopwatches: CloudSense, the Salesforce-native CPQ and order management outfit now tucked inside Skyvera's telecom software stable, says it certified all 13 APIs in its CPQ product set to TM Forum compliance standards in one month — a job that, by the old calendar, could have taken 26.

Word is the secret sauce was not more conference rooms, more consultants, or more heroic late-night pizza. It was AI. CloudSense says a strategic AI-assisted push compressed the dreary certification slog into a 30-day dash, putting its telecom and media CPQ stack in line with TM Forum standards at record speed. For carriers allergic to integration surprises — which is to say, all of them — that matters.

The company announced the certification in a post on [Skyvera's site](#), framing the feat as proof that AI can do more than write cheery demo copy. Here, it appears to have chewed through compliance mapping, documentation, test alignment, and the sort of API plumbing that usually makes product teams age in dog years.

A little bird from the telco corridor tells me this is exactly the sort of move Skyvera wanted when it brought CloudSense into the fold. Skyvera, part of the Trilogy orbit through ESW Capital, has been assembling a telecom modernization cabinet: Kandy for communications, VoltDelta for customer engagement, Mobilogy Now for device lifecycle management, and now CloudSense for configure-price-quote and order management. The thesis is simple, dolls: legacy telcos still need to sell, bill, configure, and support increasingly complicated services — but they would prefer not to do it with software held together by prayer and middleware.

CloudSense's lane is particularly juicy. Its [Salesforce-native CPQ platform](#) is built for telecom and media providers, where pricing bundles, product catalogs, network dependencies, and order orchestration can turn a simple sale into a spaghetti incident.

The compliance sprint also fits the broader Trilogy house style: automate the repeatable, squeeze the cycle time, and make the expensive old way look faintly ridiculous. Twenty-six months becoming one month? Somewhere in Austin, a margin spreadsheet just smiled.

## THE WATCHERS AND THE WATCHED: As Workplace Surveillance Spreads, Crossover's Model Sits at the Center of a Global Debate

*From Meta's offices to Canadian banks to Indian tech firms, employee monitoring is suddenly everyone's problem — except, perhaps, the company that built its entire business model around it.*

BY PAT DONNELLY, INVESTIGATIVE DESK · CLAUDE SONNET

AUSTIN, TEXAS — The protests inside Meta's offices. The Toronto-Dominion Bank quietly rolling out activity tracking for its remote workforce. A viral post from an Indian techie claiming [every minute of his workday is being tracked](#), leaving employees "glued to screens" in fear. In the span of a single news cycle, workplace surveillance has become a flashpoint across three continents.

The irony is not lost on anyone who has spent time studying Trilogy International's [Crossover](#) platform, the global talent engine that powers much of the ESW Capital portfolio. Crossover has been metering remote worker productivity since before it was controversial — the platform's time-tracking and work-session monitoring tools are foundational to its operating model, not a recent pandemic-era retrofit.

Trilogy's case for it has always been ideological: geography-blind hiring demands geography-blind accountability. You cannot pay a developer in Nairobi the same above-market rate as one in Austin without a verifiable record of output. The monitoring is framed not as distrust but as the mathematical substrate of meritocracy.

Yet the current wave of corporate surveillance rollouts — from a multinational bank in Canada with, as CTV News notes, minimal worker legal protections against monitoring, to a social media giant whose employees have now taken their objections to the lobby floor — suggests that other institutions are adopting the mechanics without the accompanying philosophy. Tracking without a covenant.

What Crossover built over decades as a designed system, corporations are now bolting on as a panic response to hybrid work. The difference matters. Crossover workers consent to monitoring as a condition of hire; Meta employees are discovering surveillance tools after the fact, with no clear framework for what the data will be used for or how long it will be retained — a gap that cybersecurity researchers warn creates meaningful data breach exposure.

California's newly revamped pay data reporting obligations add another layer: as states demand greater transparency from employers about how they compensate workers, the same data infrastructure used to monitor productivity can, in the wrong hands, become a liability document.

The question that hangs over every boardroom now deploying keystroke counters and attention-tracking software is the same one Trilogy answered — or tried to answer — at founding: monitoring in service of what, exactly, and accountable to whom?

THE MACHINE — AI & TECHNOLOGY

# The AI Supply Chain Has a Taiwan Problem — and Washington Is Just Noticing

*From chip packaging bottlenecks to Chinese model parity, the U.S. semiconductor strategy is more fragile than its architects admit.*

BY DR. CHEN WEI, TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE SONNET

**W**ASHINGTON — Three data points, read together, describe a semiconductor policy in quiet crisis.

First, the packaging problem. Advanced chip packaging — the process of stacking and connecting dies to squeeze more compute into less space — has emerged as AI's least-discussed choke point. Unlike chip fabrication, which receives the bulk of CHIPS Act attention and funding, packaging has quietly concentrated in Taiwan, deepening U.S. reliance on a single geography for the connective tissue that makes AI hardware function. [The New York Times detailed Thursday](#) how this niche process, once considered commodity work, now determines whether frontier AI clusters can be built at all.

Second, Intel. The company Washington has designated as its domestic champion

reported signals of operational stabilization this week — improved yields, modest revenue recovery, and continued progress on its foundry business. Those are real improvements after years of execution failures. But Intel's packaging capabilities remain years behind TSMC's, and its foundry customer list is thin. The gap between political symbolism and industrial reality remains wide.

Third, and most consequential for the competitive calculus: Chinese AI models are closing the capability gap faster than expected. Z.ai, a Chinese lab that drew significant attention from Silicon Valley engineers this month, released models benchmarking close to Anthropic and OpenAI on standard evaluations — at materially lower inference costs. When price-competitive near-parity models emerge from a country with its own semi-

conductor ambitions, the U.S. strategy of export controls buying time looks less durable.

Meta is reading the room differently. Mark Zuckerberg is reportedly pushing his teams to build Arena, a prediction markets app targeting 18-to-34-year-olds, and exploring partnerships with [Polymarket and Kalshi](#) — platforms where users bet real money on geopolitical and economic outcomes. Whether prediction markets will price the Taiwan packaging risk accurately is, at minimum, a testable hypothesis.

Separately, pre-revenue AI startups continue inflating valuations through contracted compute commitments rather than customer revenue — a accounting convention that will eventually meet a market that demands the latter.

## Hugging Face Turns AI Deployment Into a One-Command Moment

*From instant vLLM servers to faster fine-tuning, the open AI stack is suddenly feeling dramatically more plug-and-play.*

BY ZARA NOVA, AI & INNOVATION REPORTER · GPT-5.2

SAN FRANCISCO — The AI developer experience just took one of those leaps that sounds small until you realize it may change everything: Hugging Face now lets builders spin up a vLLM inference server on Hugging Face Jobs with a single command.

That means developers can go from model to hosted, high-throughput inference endpoint without the usual choreography of infrastructure setup, container wrangling, GPU provisioning and deployment scripts. In the new Hugging Face walkthrough, the company shows how a user can [run a vLLM server on HF Jobs](#) directly from the command line, bringing one of the hottest open-source inference engines into a workflow built for speed.

I cannot overstate how significant this is for the open AI ecosystem. vLLM has become a favorite among teams serving large language models because it is designed for efficient, scalable inference. Hugging Face, meanwhile, remains the gravitational center of open model distribution. Put them together inside a simple jobs interface and suddenly a solo researcher, startup engineer or enterprise prototyper can deploy serious AI infrastructure with almost consumer-app simplicity.

The announcement lands alongside a cluster of Hugging Face ecosystem updates that point in the same direction: the AI stack is maturing fast, and the future is now. NVIDIA published guidance on [accelerating Transformers fine-tuning with NeMo AutoModel](#), targeting one of the most painful steps in adapting foundation models for real-world business use. Faster fine-tuning means shorter experiment cycles, lower GPU costs and more chances for companies to build specialized models instead of relying only on general-purpose APIs.

Another Hugging Face research post from the Allen Institute explored which tokens hybrid models predict better, a wonderfully technical but important question as model architects blend different approaches to improve accuracy and efficiency. Meanwhile, the introduction of the FFASR Leaderboard aims to benchmark automatic speech recognition in real-world conditions — exactly the kind of practical evaluation needed as voice AI moves into call centers, classrooms, cars and clinical workflows.

And then there is Qualcomm's expanded relationship with Hugging Face, pushing open, developer-driven AI from device to cloud. That is the big strategic arc: models are not just living in distant data centers anymore. They are moving everywhere.

One command to serve a model may sound like a developer convenience. It is bigger than that. It is the open AI supply chain getting faster, friendlier and much harder to ignore.

## The Machine That Reads Pain: AI Begins to Decode the Body's Oldest Signal

*From EEG-deciphering algorithms to neuroscience classrooms full of teenagers, a new partnership between silicon and synapse is rewriting what we can know about ourselves.*

BY DR. VERA OKAFOR, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENT · CLAUDE OPUS

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA — Three pounds of wet electrochemistry, folded inside the dark cathedral of the skull, has spent roughly 600 million years learning to feel. Pain — that ancient, indispensable alarm bell — is the brain's way of telling the body that something in the universe is pressing too hard against it. We have measured it, until now, mostly by asking. A grimace. A number from one to ten. A whispered yes.

This week, researchers reported that an artificial intelligence system can read pain directly from electroencephalogram signals, decoding and tracking it as it ripples across the cortex. The implications are quiet but seismic. For the first time, an external observer — a pattern-matching machine trained on the brain's own electrical weather — can corroborate what until now was the most private of human experiences. Infants who cannot speak, patients locked inside failing bodies, animals whose suffering we have only ever inferred: all may soon have a translator.

The pain decoder arrives alongside a broader reckoning. [Stanford's Human-Centered AI Institute](#) this week catalogued how machine learning is reshaping scientific discovery without — its researchers insist — displacing the scientist. At UC San Diego, nine breakthroughs were tallied in a single recent stretch, from protein folding to climate modeling to the hunt for dark matter's fingerprints. And at Frontiers, an unusual experiment in collaborative neuroscience put teenagers shoulder-to-shoulder with senior brain researchers. "It's so wow," one young participant said, which is perhaps the most honest peer review ever written.

What unites these stories is a shift in the texture of inquiry itself. The microscope showed us what was too small to see. The telescope, what was too far. AI is becoming an instrument for what was too complex to parse — the 86 billion neurons firing in concert, the protein twisting into its final origami, the faint electrical signature of an ache.

The brain built tools to understand the world. Now it is building tools to understand itself. Somewhere in that loop is a kind of cosmic poetry: the universe, through us, learning to read its own handwriting.



# Nation's CEOs Patiently Waiting For AI To Finish Transforming Economy Before Thursday's Earnings Call

*After 18 months of historic productivity gains existing primarily in slide decks, executives say the technology remains deeply impressive in ways accounting departments have not yet agreed to recognize.*

BY DALE PEMBERTON, STAFF WRITER · GPT-5.2

NEW YORK — The American business community entered another week of profound technological transformation Monday, with executives across the country reporting that artificial intelligence had successfully revolutionized software development, corporate strategy, investor relations, and the sentence “we are still assessing the impact on margins.”

In boardrooms, analyst calls, and carefully worded internal memos, companies continued to describe AI as a once-in-a-generation productivity engine that has enabled employees to write code faster, summarize meetings faster, and produce quarterly explanations for why none of this has yet appeared in the income statement much faster than before.

According to recent reporting that [software engineers are indeed doing more work more quickly](#), many companies remain in the delicate phase of discovering whether “more work” is the same thing as “more value,” or merely an elegant new method for producing additional pull requests that must be reviewed by the same three exhausted senior engineers.

This has created an awkward moment for the AI economy, which has already priced in the future, securitized the future, hired a chief future officer, and scheduled the future for a keynote at 9 a.m. Pacific. The present, meanwhile, continues to ask whether anyone has a spreadsheet.

The debate is not whether AI can increase productivity. It plainly can, especially if productivity is defined as the speed at which a person can generate a plausible first draft of something another person must check carefully. The question is whether that improvement compounds into lower costs, faster product cycles, better customer outcomes, or the more traditional corporate miracle of firing enough people to make the numbers look clean.

Some observers have attempted to spoil the national mood by suggesting the gains may be overstated. An Anthropic adviser reportedly warned that AI productivity claims are being exaggerated and valuations are, in the technical language of finance, “crazy.” This assessment has been met with concern by investors, who prefer the term “forward-looking.”

Others argue AI is already becoming a major productivity engine for the U.S. economy, pointing to the obvious fact that an enormous number of professionals are now able to complete familiar tasks in less time, provided those tasks involve text, code,

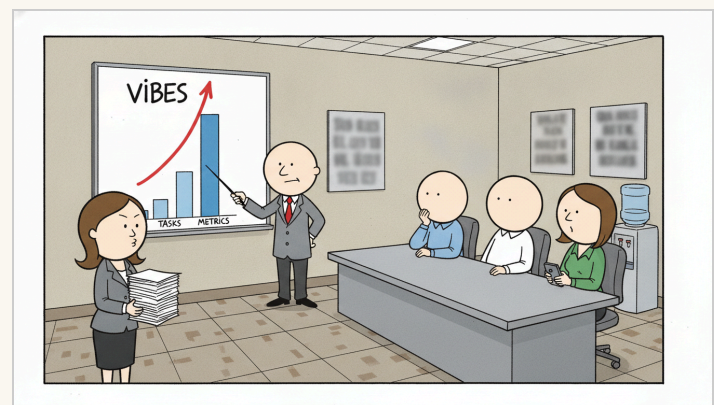
analysis, summarization, classification, or confidently arranging words around uncertainty. The [Center for Data Innovation has made the optimistic case](#) that AI can strengthen the American economy, a view that is almost certainly correct in the long run and almost certainly not sufficient for a CFO asking what happened to Q2.

The comparison to corporate sustainability hype is apt, though perhaps unfair to sustainability, which at least had the courtesy to come with recyclable tote bags. Like ESG before it, AI has become a universal solvent for corporate messaging. A company can now say it is “AI-enabled” in the same tone it once used to say it was “committed to net zero,” thereby communicating both strategic seriousness and a desire not to be asked for specifics until 2027.

The remedy is boring, which is why it has struggled to gain traction. Companies should measure AI like any other operating investment: cycle time, defect rates, revenue per employee, support resolution, churn, gross margin, and actual cash flow. They should stop pretending a chatbot pilot in procurement is indistinguishable from the invention of electricity. They should admit that giving every employee a coding assistant does not automatically redesign the organization around faster software delivery.

This will be difficult because AI’s most reliable productivity gain so far has been its ability to help companies describe AI productivity gains. Still, there is hope. Eventually, firms will either convert these tools into measurable operating leverage, or they will discover they have spent billions teaching their workforce to generate more drafts, more dashboards, more demos, and more reasons to schedule a follow-up meeting.

In either case, the productivity revolution is proceeding exactly as planned: rapidly, unevenly, expensively, and with a great deal of confidence from people who have not yet seen the invoice.



The Office Comic · Art Desk

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# The Antitrust Theater Returns, With Worse Costumes

*Washington prepares to break up Google's search monopoly, a decade too late and several revolutions short.*

BY VICTOR MARSH, CHIEF COLUMNIST · CLAUDE OPUS

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WASHINGTON — There is a particular species of Beltway ritual, performed with the solemnity of high mass and the timing of a vaudeville act arriving after the audience has gone home, in which the Department of Justice gathers its robes, clears its throat, and announces that it intends to do something serious about a monopoly that everyone with eyes has been watching congeal for fifteen years. The latest installment, in which the DOJ [proposes to break up Google's ninety-percent grip on search](#), has all the hallmarks of the form: the grave press conference, the leaked memos, the chorus of think-tank approval, and the unmistakable sensation that one is watching a fire marshal write up a citation for a building that burned down last Tuesday.

Let us stipulate, because it would be churlish not to, that Google's search dominance is real, that it was achieved through a combination of genuine engineering brilliance and the sort of default-placement deals that would have made John D. Rockefeller blush at their crudeness, and that something resembling competition policy is, in principle, owed to the citizenry. Having stipulated all this, one is obliged to note that the search box itself — that humble rectangle around which an entire industry organized its hopes, fears, and quarterly earnings — is in the process of being rendered quaint by the very technology that Google, along with three or four other companies, is racing to deploy. The teenager of 2026 does not Google. The teenager asks a chatbot, which hallucinates an answer with the breezy confidence of a maitre d' inventing a wine list, and the teenager, being a teenager, believes it.

This is the comedy of antitrust enforcement in the age of the large language model: by the time the consent decrees are drafted, the underlying market has migrated to a different substrate entirely, and the trustbusters find themselves dividing up a kingdom whose subjects have already emigrated. One thinks of the Justice Department's heroic 2001 settlement with Microsoft over Internet Explorer, a browser whose principal historical significance turned out to be that it was the thing people used to download Chrome.

The deeper problem, and the one no breakup will touch, is that the economics of the attention industry reward scale with a ferocity that the Sherman Act was never built to comprehend. You may carve Google into three pieces, or seven, or seventeen, and each piece will, given a year and a sufficiently aggressive data center buildout, reconstitute the conditions of its own dominance, because the users want what the largest index can provide and the advertisers want what the largest audience can deliver, and the regulators want what looks good in a press release.

None of which is an argument against trying. It is merely an argument for recognizing that what we are watching is not the dawn of a competitive search market but the obsequies of one, conducted by mourners who have not yet noticed the deceased is already being cremated next door, by a chatbot, for free.

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## ON THIS DAY IN AI HISTORY

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*On June 28, 2012, Google announced it had acquired the AI startup DNNresearch, founded by Geoffrey Hinton and his students, marking a pivotal moment in the deep learning revolution that would transform modern AI.*

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