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Terence Eden's Blog

Just a little AI resistance, as a treat

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#AI #EMFCamp #NaBloPoMo · 3 comments · 750 words · Viewed ~222 times

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At the recent EMFCamp, I bumped in to Professor Kate Devlin who was talking a little about the AI Resist List. I think one of the useful things we can do is loudly complain about shitty uses of AI. Here's an example.

As mentioned in a previous post, I'm contacting companies which send malformed calendar invites. One of the organisation I contacted was the British online supermarket Ocado. They don't have an easy way to contact their technical team, and no obvious paths to raise a bug report, so I filled in their usual customer service feedback form. I included a clear statement of the problem and a detailed technical analysis of why I thought it was a problem with their service.

After sending in my message, I received this back from "Lulu" at Ocado:

> “
>
> Thanks for getting in touch and sharing this feedback about our calendar files.
>
> You're entirely right—having a technical glitch pop up when you're trying to organise your delivery is a real pain, so I've made sure to pass your feedback on to our technical and webshop team.
>
> We really appreciate you taking the time to help us improve our service. I hope you have a wonderful rest of your day
>
> ”

I mean, that's AI right? It starts with the classic tell of a sycophantic agreement.

Next up is the em-dash. Beloved by chatbots but almost unheard of in British English style guides.

Finally (and this is hard to quantify) it just doesn't *feel* like a customer service response. They're usually poorly spelled, have dodgy grammar, and ask a bunch of irrelevant questions. The message gave me no confidence that anyone had looked at the problem and I doubted it had been passed on to a technically competent human.

I immediately got a customer satisfaction survey. Usually I give top marks to humans because, even though Net Promoter Score is bullshit, I don't want customer service agents to suffer the indignity of a bad review. But in this survey I vented my spleen - giving crappy 1 ⭐ scores on every metric and complaining vociferously about how *rude* it is to use an AI to deal with a genuine complaint.

I was both surprised and delighted to receive this back a few days after my invective was sent:

> “
>
> I saw your survey comment about getting a robotic, AI-generated response previously, and I wanted to reach out personally to apologise. There is nothing more frustrating than pointing out a legitimate bug only to feel like you're talking to a brick wall. I promise you there is a real person typing this out!
>
> Second, I wanted to send a massive thank you for the incredibly detailed diagnostic. It is rare to get feedback that tells us *exactly* what is broken and how to fix it.
>
> I can assure you that this has been passed to our team to look into. Your feedback is going to make things much smoother for a lot of people, and we really appreciate you taking the extra time to help us get it right.
>
> Thank you again, I do hope that this issue is resolved quickly. If there is anything else I can help with in the meantime, please don't hesitate to get in touch.
>
> ”

Perhaps I'm being touchingly naïve, but that *feels* a lot more human, right? The grammar isn't perfect, the sentences are a bit more rambly, and it appears to have actually engaged with the contents of my message.

I get that having a million irate customer service messages is a hassle. Using AI to triage them probably makes business sense, summarising the verbose ones could be useful for customer service agents, and totting up general themes is almost certainly a sensible way to gather metrics without overloading the workforce.

But using an AI to reply to a human is just disrespectful. It says the organisation values their customer's time at less than their own.

It's OK to call out shitty AI responses and insist that a human engages with you.



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3 thoughts on “Just a little AI resistance, as a treat”

Mark Johnson

@Edent I had this with VW when I tried getting an answer about whether they'd deliberately stopped their previously functional app working on GrapheneOS. Sadly they seemed to do things the other way around, the initial responses were brief and to the point, but when I pressed them I started getting rambly generated messages devoid of actual information.

Reply | Reply to original comment on indieweb.social 2026-11-03 12:41

Prof. Catherine Flick

@blog this *was* a treat, thank you! I shop with Ocado and have been annoyed with this as well, so thanks for that too!!

Reply | Reply to original comment on mastodon.me.uk 2026-11-03 12:45

Maximilien Danton

@blog the subconscious influence of AI writing is making it harder to tell the difference. I'm finding myself writing things that sound AI and it pisses me off to no end. I'm especially having to catch myself using its dichotomy style.

"That's not just A. It's B!"

Reply | Reply to original comment on mastodon.social 2026-11-03 12:47



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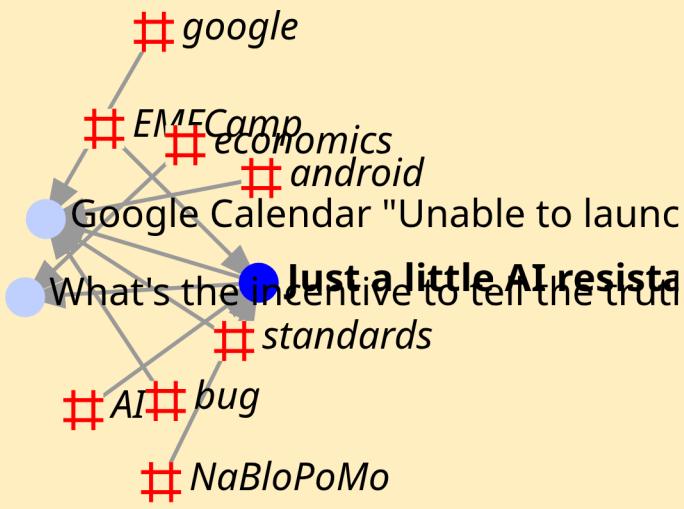

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