



Chatting about ChatGPT and Learning Businesses

Leading Learning Podcast
Transcript for Episode 341

Note: The **text highlighted in green** was generated by ChatGPT.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:00] Calculators were banned for a while; then instructors came to embrace them and, instead of forbidding them, started teaching how to use them effectively. I think that ChatGPT and other conversational AI tools have the chance to become a new and accepted tool—like calculators, like the Internet.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:25] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:26] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:35] Welcome to episode 341 of the Leading Learning Podcast. We've talked about artificial intelligence many times before on the podcast, and today we want to dig in again, this time with a narrower focus, a focus on ChatGPT.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:51] And this is fascinating, we believe, truly revolutionary stuff. **So, let's start by talking about what ChatGPT is and how it works.**

Celisa Steele: [00:01:03] **ChatGPT is a large language model trained by OpenAI. It uses machine-learning techniques to generate human-like text based on a given prompt or conversation. Essentially, it can hold a natural conversation with a human, just like we are doing right now.**

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:21] By the way, GPT stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer. And ChatGPT, which was launched on November 30, 2022, is built on top of the most recent generation of GPT, GPT-3. The addition of a familiar chat interface to GPT-3 was intended to make it much more user-friendly for the average person who may still feel pretty daunted by the prospect of using AI. And that seems to have really worked. In the five days following the launch, more than a million users signed up, more than a million users in five days.

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Celisa Steele: [00:01:59] And then two million users in ten days, which I find truly astonishing. And we do encourage you, dear listener, if you haven't already, to go and sign up for an account. It's free to do that, at least for now. And then you'll be able to engage in some experiential learning and try ChatGPT for yourself. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode341, you'll find a link to where you can sign up, as well as the show notes for this episode and some other related resources.

Jeff Cobb: [00:02:32] And I'll note that a few times recently when I've gone to use it, it's said that it's basically not accessible because so many people are using it. It's full up. But, still, definitely do check it out if you haven't yet. Take the time to wait to get in if you have to. As you mentioned, Celisa, it's free, currently, during what OpenAI is calling the research preview, but that's almost certain to change. To get a little more into how it works, you access it online, and you type in a prompt, and that could be a question, it could be a request, and ChatGPT responds pretty much immediately, and then you can respond to its response so that that conversation starts to happen.

Celisa Steele: [00:03:11] And to support that conversational feel, ChatGPT remembers what you said or actually typed earlier in the conversation, and that allows you to provide follow-up corrections that can then inform the future responses from ChatGPT. So that's what GPT is. Now, let's talk about what it might mean for learning and learning businesses.

Jeff Cobb: [00:03:36] ChatGPT is already used in a number of educational settings. For example, some universities are using it to create personalized study plans for students based on their goals and learning styles. Others are using it as a tutor, providing students with instant feedback and support as they work through online course materials.

Celisa Steele: [00:03:56] There are also companies that are using ChatGPT to create personalized learning experiences for professional development and continuing education. These programs can be tailored to the specific needs and goals of the individual learner, and they can be accessed anytime, anywhere.

Jeff Cobb: [00:04:15] The ability to create personalized learning experiences that are tailored to the needs and goals of the individual learner has the potential to significantly improve the effectiveness of continuing education and professional development programs.

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Celisa Steele: [00:04:29] But ChatGPT also has the potential to democratize access to education and training. By providing instant feedback and support, ChatGPT can help learners overcome roadblocks and stay motivated as they work towards their goals.

Jeff Cobb: [00:04:46] I think something that's really interesting is that ChatGPT could serve as an AI-driven coach, and you and Jen Lewi, Celisa, talked about coaching and learning in a recent episode. Something like ChatGPT could make coaching more affordable and accessible, so not just for the high-paid executives anymore. And there are already a number of AI-based coaching programs out there like Cultivate and Edthena, and we'll be sure to link to those in the show notes.

Celisa Steele: [00:05:15] That's really interesting. ChatGPT has the potential to not only improve the quality of lifelong learning and professional development but also make it more accessible to a wider range of people.

Jeff Cobb: [00:05:28] ChatGPT is already being used in some learning situations, and, in fact, I'll note that our high school student recently shared, at dinner, that his school has blocked the site on the school Internet.

Celisa Steele: [00:05:42] Now, let's talk about some of the other applications and implications of ChatGPT. And I think there are two clear areas where this technology has implications. It has implications for learners, and it has implications for those providing the learning.

Jeff Cobb: [00:06:00] For learners, it can help them solve problems and complete assignments. You can type in, say, math-based word problems, and ChatGPT can solve those. It can troubleshoot computer code, and uses like that are consistent with what we've already said about coaching and personalized learning.

Celisa Steele: [00:06:19] It also means that, potentially, the value of assignments like "Write 500 words about effective leadership" or word-based math problems like what you just mentioned, Jeff, or anything along those lines, the value of those kinds of assignments could radically change. A learner could simply copy and paste a ChatGPT response and use it as a short essay. Maybe they'll make a few minor edits, include some nods to things that were talked about in a particular course. Or someone could also take the answer that ChatGPT gives to a word problem and use that answer without really understanding the operations that went into solving the problem.

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Jeff Cobb: [00:07:03] Definitely. There's the potential for cheating or misuse, but this reminds me of the hubbub about calculators in math class, way back. Calculators were banned for a while; then instructors came to embrace them and, instead of forbidding them, started teaching how to use them effectively. I think that ChatGPT and other conversational AI tools have the chance to become a new and accepted tool—like calculators, like the Internet.

Celisa Steele: [00:07:39] As someone who listens to the Leading Learning Podcast, you should know about the Leading Learning Newsletter, which you can subscribe to at leadinglearning.com/inbox. The newsletter is inbox intelligence for learning businesses and helps you understand the latest technology, marketing, and learning trends and grow your learning business. Best of all, it's a free resource. As a subscriber, you get Leading Links, our monthly curated collection of resources to help you grow the reach, revenue, and impact of your learning business; the podcast digest, a monthly summary of podcast episodes released during the previous month; plus periodic announcements highlighting Leading Learning Webinars and other educational opportunities designed to benefit learning business professionals. Subscribe for free at leadinglearning.com/inbox. And, if you're already subscribed, point a colleague to leadinglearning.com/inbox.

Jeff Cobb: [00:08:37] ChatGPT clearly can serve a purpose for learners, and a lot comes down currently to the learner's ethics in terms of whether that purpose is getting out of work or actually supporting learning. On the learning business side, ChatGPT also has clear uses.

Celisa Steele: [00:08:57] ChatGPT could radically change how learning businesses make use of subject matter experts, for example, and how those learning businesses interact with those SMEs. I can imagine a staff member, an instructional designer, for example, using ChatGPT to come up with an initial list of essential things learners need to know about recognizing signs of dementia or about effective written communication. And then that list could be turned over to an SME for validation and refinement.

Jeff Cobb: [00:09:30] Or vice versa. Use the human SME to get the list of essential topical areas, and then have ChatGPT produce content on those areas.

Celisa Steele: [00:09:39] Or both.

Jeff Cobb: [00:09:41] Right. And something similar could be done with assessments. You could use ChatGPT to generate questions to ask learners or ask it about ideas for assignments.

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Celisa Steele: [00:09:51] In fact, I tried both of those with ChatGPT before we sat down to record, and ChatGPT readily gave me ten questions about diabetes when I asked. So it returned things like:

- “What are the complications of diabetes?”
- “How is diabetes treated?”
- “Can diabetes be prevented?”
- “What new technologies are available for diabetes management?”

And then when I asked, “What would be a good assignment to give someone who needs to learn more about how to prevent diabetes?,” it readily gave me six ideas, and I’ll just share a few of them here. One was “Research the risk factors for type 2 diabetes and create a list of lifestyle changes that can help reduce the risk of developing the disease.” Another one was “Write an informational leaflet about the link between diet and diabetes prevention. This could include information about the role of different types of food, such as carbohydrates, fats, and proteins in blood sugar control, as well as tips for healthy eating and meal planning.” It also gave this suggestion: “Create a plan for increasing physical activity in order to prevent diabetes. This could include finding fun ways to be more active, setting goals, and tracking progress.”

Jeff Cobb: [00:11:08] None of that’s earth-shattering. If you’re already an expert in this, then you know that stuff. But that’s the point. It’s pretty impressive for AI to be coming up with this based on your providing it with these prompts and basically giving it direction on what you want. And, as you might expect, we’re now seeing the emergence of e-learning authoring tools that are AI-based and will, no doubt, automate and improve on that more manual effort that you just described, Celisa. For example, Nolej, which is spelled N- O- L- E- J, is one that we’re going to be checking out, and we’ll be sure to link to that in the show notes. But, of course, educational content is not all that ChatGPT will be used for. Learning businesses also have marketing needs, and ChatGPT can really help there as well.

Celisa Steele: [00:11:57] Definitely. It could, for example, write drafts of course descriptions or conference session descriptions, or it could help with titles for blog posts or e-mail subject lines or social media posts. And, again, I tried out these kinds of activities in ChatGPT. I used as my prompt, in one case, “Give me some title ideas for a blog post about using ChatGPT to support lifelong learning.” And then this is what it spit back out. One was “ChatGPT: A Lifelong Learning Companion.” Another was “Revolutionizing Education with ChatGPT.” “Leveraging ChatGPT for Self-Directed “Learning,” “Continuous Learning with ChatGPT.” And then the last one I’ll share is “Using ChatGPT to Enhance Your Learning Journey.”

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Jeff Cobb: [00:12:47] And so, for learning businesses that need to feed the content machine to attract users to their site, which so many of us need to do, this really can be a game changer. It's something we're taking a very close look at right now. We've already got a license to Jasper.ai, which is one of the platforms out there that's leveraging GPT and now ChatGPT to give you the ability to create both short-form and long-form content. We're in a specialized enough area, as many of our listeners are, where we're not expecting Jasper or ChatGPT to churn out exactly what we need but, as we've already been suggesting along the way here, to churn out content that's a starting point. Or to help you clarify your thoughts and then churn out some content that you can build off of, that can really accelerate the pace at which you're able to produce content. And, as long as you're providing your own lens to it and bringing your own perspective and your expertise to it, it's still going to be authoritative, expert-driven, trustworthy content that you're producing. You're just able to produce it much faster and in a much more, hopefully, targeted way as you're really providing the parameters that the AI can use in helping you to develop that content.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:13] I think it's pretty clear that we're excited about ChatGPT.

Jeff Cobb: [00:14:17] I know I certainly am. I feel like this is the tipping point on AI that we've been waiting for. We've been talking about this for years, but I think it's just been out of the reach of the ordinary person up until now. And I think that this can and will radically change how we learn and how we live.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:37] But, of course, as with so many things, it's not 100-percent clear that ChatGPT will only lead to good things. There are some serious concerns about ChatGPT, so we should be sure to touch on those as well. **One concern is the potential for ChatGPT to perpetuate existing biases. If the data used to train the model contains biased language or information, ChatGPT may reproduce and amplify those biases in its responses. This could have negative consequences for marginalized groups, who may be disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result.**

Jeff Cobb: [00:15:17] And, in a similar vein, ChatGPT can be used—or rather misused—for creating and spreading misinformation or information that's just simply wrong. And, unfortunately, ChatGPT can do that with even greater scale and speed than what we've already seen happening in this area. And that, of course, can lead to what we would call mislearning, or learning what really isn't totally valid or true.

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Celisa Steele: [00:15:44] And that's something organizations are really going to have to be attuned to. Ezra Klein talked about ChatGPT in a recent episode of his podcast, and we'll be sure to link to that episode in the show notes at [leadinglearning.com/episode341](https://www.leadinglearning.com/episode341). GPT, and really AI in general, is just not yet very competent at determining the truth of content. So, to the extent that learning businesses and their SMEs do leverage something like ChatGPT to generate content, there's going to be an ethical obligation to assess the validity of that content.

Jeff Cobb: [00:16:24] And then another concern is around cost and therefore accessibility down the road. Currently, this is free, but it won't remain that way. And, when it's not free, then we'll get into a haves and have-nots situation.

Celisa Steele: [00:16:39] When we first started talking, we mentioned that ChatGPT also has the potential to democratize access to education, but that democratizing potential will be undercut depending on the costs. **Another ethical consideration is the potential for ChatGPT to replace human instructors or tutors. While ChatGPT can provide instant feedback and support, it may not be able to fully replicate the nuanced and empathetic interactions that a human instructor can provide. This could have implications for the employment of educators and raises questions about the appropriate role of AI in education.**

Jeff Cobb: [00:17:21] And this may be a good place to come clean and share that part of what we've said so far in this conversation has been us reading text that GPT actually produced.

Celisa Steele: [00:17:33] Right. I played around and asked ChatGPT to produce a podcast script for a show about the implications of ChatGPT on the creation and consumption of lifelong learning, professional development, and continuing education, and we've incorporated some of what it generated into this conversation.

Jeff Cobb: [00:17:51] And we didn't include anything that we don't feel is true or accurate. And it's only been a small percentage of our overall conversation, probably between 10 and 25 percent, at most. If you're curious to know exactly what content was generated by ChatGPT, then check out the transcript available in the show notes at [leadinglearning.com/episode341](https://www.leadinglearning.com/episode341). We've highlighted the content that came from GPT in the PDF transcript available near the top of the show notes. Anyhow, in playing around with ChatGPT to generate a podcast script, it was interesting to see that it could do a reasonable job doing the work that two humans—namely you and me, Celisa—usually do. Which gets to that point about replacing human instructors, which, by the way, was one of the ethical considerations that ChatGPT raised when you asked it to talk about the ethical considerations of being used for learning.

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Celisa Steele: [00:18:49] Finally, we'll mention something that's less of a concern and more of a limitation. ChatGPT has "limited knowledge of world and events after 2021," according to its makers. So it wouldn't be good to use for late-breaking stuff. It wouldn't be much help to your learners or your learning business around current events or new discoveries.

Jeff Cobb: [00:19:13] And in fact, because of that limited knowledge, ChatGPT could return incorrect information. Again, the makers acknowledge that, but it's definitely something to be aware of, particularly if you offer high-stakes learning or operate in a field or industry where things change often.

Celisa Steele: [00:19:30] Despite those concerns and limitations, we are quite bullish on the possibilities, and we're fascinated to see what this easy-to-use, competent, helpful, quick-to-respond artificial intelligence will mean for how we all learn, work, and live.

Jeff Cobb: [00:19:49] Definitely. And it's going to evolve rapidly. GTP-4 is on the horizon and won't be that long before it comes out. I think that will open up the post-2021 information, open up the Internet more broadly. It's going to take it to even new levels. Our message at this point is simple. Go try it, and think about how you can apply it. What could ChatGPT or a similar technology do to improve the reach, the revenue, and the impact of your learning business?

Celisa Steele: [00:20:29] So that's our look at ChatGPT and some of the applications and implications for learning businesses. At leadinglearning.com/episode341, you'll find a link to access ChatGPT, so you can take it for a test drive yourself, and you'll also find the transcript that will show you which parts of this conversation were generated by AI.

Jeff Cobb: [00:20:52] At the leadinglearning.com/episode341, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast, and, if you haven't yet, please do subscribe.

Celisa Steele: [00:21:02] Yes, please do, as those subscription numbers give us some visibility into the impact of the podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:21:08] We'd also be grateful if you would take a minute to rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you enjoy the show. Celisa and I personally appreciate reviews and ratings, and they help the podcast show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

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Celisa Steele: [00:21:24] Lastly, please spread the word about Leading Learning. You can do that in a one-on-one note or conversation with a colleague, or you can do it through social media. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode341, you'll find links to connect with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Jeff Cobb: [00:21:42] Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

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