



Marketing AI with Paul Roetzer

Leading Learning Podcast Transcript for Episode 346

Paul Roetzer: [00:00:00] To me, curiosity is the key to learning, and it is absolutely the key to understanding AI.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:11] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:12] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:21] Welcome to episode 346, which features a conversation with Paul Roetzer. Paul is CEO of Marketing AI Institute. Before starting the institute, he founded PR 20/20, HubSpot's first partner agency. Marketing AI Institute's mission is to make artificial intelligence approachable and actionable. They do this through three primary areas: community, education, and technology. Paul and Celisa talk about what artificial intelligence is (as there's not always agreement on the definition of AI), why Paul believes we're at a tipping point with AI, the 5Ps of marketing AI, and use cases where a learning business looking to start leveraging AI to help with marketing might focus first. Celisa and Paul spoke in February 2023.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:21] So, tell us a little bit more about the Marketing AI Institute, the work that it does, and your role there.

Paul Roetzer: [00:01:29] I am not an AI researcher, technical AI researcher. I am not a machine learning engineer or data scientist. I was a liberal arts major. I came out of the journalism school at Ohio University in 2000. For me, my curiosity about AI started in 2011, and I looked at that my unique ability was to tell the story of AI, to make it make sense to other people. So I spent a few years myself trying to understand it. Once I felt like I had developed a reasonable grasp of what it was, what it was capable of doing, and developed a point of view on what I thought its impact was going to be on our industry, on business, and on society, I started to share that. And that was the origin of the Marketing AI Institute as I looked and said, "Well, we're doing all this work. I'm spending all this time trying to learn AI, maybe other people will be curious as well, and let's just tell the story of it". That was the origin of the Institute back in 2016. Today it's a media event and education company that largely still does the same concept as make AI approachable and actionable to marketers, primarily, but more and more its businesses as a whole, and business leaders.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:43] Do you remember what it was specifically that got you interested in AI back in 2011?

Paul Roetzer: [00:02:48] IBM Watson won on Jeopardy in February 2011. Watson defeated Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter. I didn't understand what it was, but I was intrigued. So, I started

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trying to figure out—how does that tech work? I had a very specific use case in mind. I thought once I comprehended it... in essence, what it does is it predicts the probability of something being correct. Watson didn't know if the answers were right or not. They had a confidence level based on its knowledge. It would do a lookup of information and it would understand the question to a degree, and then it would give a confidence level of, let's say it's above 92% or whatever the number was, then it would ring in an answer. And so, I thought, "Well, that's interesting. I wonder if people came to our agency to try and figure out ways to grow their business," and I was using my limited human mind to try and figure out how to do that. In 2011, there were 10,000 ways to spend your money. When I got out of college in 2000, there were like five. So, my feeling was the world had become too complicated, too complex to be able to do those things, marketing strategy in particular. It seemed like AI might be able to help do that if I could build probabilities of a campaign working or not, and the machine could tell me, yes, that's a good way to spend \$10,000 or \$100,000. So, that use case is what originally drove me—can I use AI to build smarter strategies?

Celisa Steele: [00:04:18] Very interesting. I do feel like before we go too much further, I should pause and ask you to define "artificial intelligence." I think it's one of those terms that gets thrown around, and maybe people don't always know exactly what it means or they have slightly different things in mind. So, tell us how you define "artificial intelligence."

Paul Roetzer: [00:04:36] Both of those statements are very true. Many don't understand it. Then, even if they do, they don't agree on the definition. So, I spent years trying to find a definition that I thought made sense, and that could be explained to non-technical people. When I started looking into it in 2011, the only people talking about AI were the technical people. So, you had to synthesize what they were saying and try and figure out what it actually meant. They would explain AI by using terminology you didn't understand. It's just like, "Okay, I don't even understand the words you're using in the definition." So, I eventually came across an interview in Rolling Stone magazine with Demis Hassabis. He's the CEO of DeepMind, which was a major AI research lab that Google purchased in 2014. He is still the CEO of DeepMind, it's just a part of Google now. And he said "AI is the science of making machines smart." I thought it was the clearest explanation of AI. What he means by that is, think of a machine as software. So anything you use software for is a learning management system, a CRM, an ad management platform, a social media management platform, whatever it may be. Just think of the software you use to do our jobs. It never gets better, unless new features are released in the software, and then you have to learn how to use the new features.

Paul Roetzer: [00:05:52] The software never does anything that you don't tell it to do. All software we are used to using in marketing, sales, business, and learning is human-powered. Humans write the rules to tell the software what to do. What he's saying is AI is the science of making machines or software smart, meaning the software starts learning on its own. It starts adapting and evolving what it does, and what you're capable of doing based on new information it gathers. So if we send an e-mail campaign to drive people to convert as new learners, and you send 10,000 e-mails right now, the next e-mail you send, maybe you look at the analytics and you're trying to figure out, "I need a better subject line, or I need a better offer, or whatever it may be." In the case of AI, it looks at the data, all the data, and it finds anomalies and open rates, clicks, things, and conversions. It starts to send smarter e-mails. So, that's the premise. Rather than us having to write all these rules and tell the software what to do, the AI

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can learn from new information and it can improve its recommendations or its predictions or outputs based on that information.

Celisa Steele: [00:07:00] Paul, you and I are talking in February of 2023, and this feels like a watershed moment in artificial intelligence. I know that you've talked about it as being a tipping point in AI. Would you explain what you mean by "now being a tipping point" and why you think we are at a tipping point?

Paul Roetzer: [00:07:22] I thought we had reached an inflection point in the middle of 2022 when OpenAI released DALL-E 2, which, if you're not familiar, is an image generation technology. So, anyone, by the summer of 2022, could go on OpenAI's site and access DALL-E and create an account. It was free initially, and then it was \$15 a month. You could give a text prompt, and it would generate an image—a photorealistic image, an illustration, a chalk drawing, or whatever you could imagine you could generate images with. That was a very important turning point, because AI became tangible at that moment. So, you use AI dozens, if not hundreds, of times every day in your personal life with Netflix, Spotify, Amazon, Google, and all these different technologies—social media, TikTok, and Twitter. None of those things are possible without AI. But you don't know that's what you're using. You don't willingly say, "I'm going to go use an AI tool." DALL-E was the first moment where anyone could go and use an AI tool and actually be in awe. That magic moment of—how is it doing that? And then show other people like, "Look at this; give me a text prompt, and I'll generate six images for you right now." So that started it. And then, on November 30, 2022 is when ChatGPT came out, and it just blew the doors open.

Paul Roetzer: [00:08:45] So it exposed what now is, as of two days ago, projected to be 100 million monthly active users of ChatGPT. The fastest growing consumer technology in history. Within 60 days of this technology coming out, 100 million people are purported to have used this technology. If you haven't tried it yet, it's mind-blowing. It really is shocking that a tool can do what it does. Now, it's not necessarily to me because I knew what was coming and there were actually versions of this already living within other platforms. It was the right tool at the right moment with the right interface, and it just took off to their own surprise. There was a *New York Times* article just this morning... that they had no idea that this was going to happen. But it changed everything. The average person now knows what ChatGPT is, and people from all walks of life and all business backgrounds have tried it. I get the texts from family and friends that I didn't even know knew I worked in AI about like "I used this tool, and, oh, my gosh, do I have a job in six months?" It changed everything. It made AI accessible and, to some degree, understandable.

Celisa Steele: [00:10:04] You, of course, focus on a specific use of AI, the use of AI for marketing. So would you just describe for us how you characterize the current state of AI marketing and then where you see it headed from this point going forward?

Paul Roetzer: [00:10:21] For a few years now, I've said that I thought that within three to five years, at least 80-percent of the things we do every day as marketers would be intelligently automated to some degree. What I meant by that was if you're a writer, if you write copy for blog posts or articles or whatever, you would be using AI in some capacity to help you be a better writer. If you're creating courses, you would be using AI in some capacity to write the scripts, produce the videos, transcribe the audio, and summarize the transcriptions. It would be

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a part of your life. Just two days ago, I changed that to the next two to three years, and I think that might actually be conservative. I think within one to two years is actually not unrealistic. 90% plus of what we do will be assisted by AI. I think that the other major thing ChatGPT changed is the urgency for other major companies being Microsoft, Google, Meta, and Amazon to release the AI that they have sitting in their research labs. We saw it just this week. Microsoft made multiple announcements, including that Microsoft Teams now has GPT baked into it, and it'll automatically transcribe all recorded meetings and extract highlights and to-dos out of that transcription.

Paul Roetzer: [00:11:46] They, just yesterday, announced Microsoft Viva. It has GPT baked into e-mailing, and you'll be able to have sales e-mails written by just clicking a button, and it'll pull data from the CRM to write them. So if you start thinking about how you build membership bases or how you move memberships into learning products and nurture them along, it's very manual. You have to think about those workflows and how you're going to communicate values, upsell, promote the new courses, and things like that. In the very near future, AI is going to be baked into every CRM system, and AI is going to be assisting and writing all of that stuff. So it's really just a crazy moment, and I think we're going to see an accelerated adoption curve for AI in a lot of technology.

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Celisa Steele: [00:13:37] One other thing that happened last year is that you published a book that you co-authored. A book called *Marketing Artificial Intelligence: AI, Marketing, and the Future of Business*. I'm not sure exactly when in the course of 2022 did it come out. Did it come out before this—?

Paul Roetzer: [00:13:51] June.

Celisa Steele: [00:13:51] In June. Okay. Is it right at that inflection point that you were pointing to? Talk a little bit about what prompted you to write the book and what you hope to achieve with that book.

Paul Roetzer: [00:14:01] I tried to write it in 2018. I've published two books prior. I talked with my publisher, exploring the idea. I got to the proposal stage with the book and I felt like I was very clear on the beginning, how this all happened, going back to the 1950s. AI is not new. This is 70-plus-year-old technology and visions of what the technology could do. So I was very clear on how we had arrived at where we were. I felt like I had a fairly clear point of view on where I thought it was all going. I realized I didn't know the middle part of the story. I didn't know

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how it was actually being used in the moment. I was seeing a future state where all this intelligent automation is everywhere and it's baked in. Then I was looking around and talking to the software companies, talking to marketers, CMOs, and VPs, and it was what I would call my "Fermi paradox." The Fermi paradox being Fermi looked out at the universe all those years ago and said, "Where's all the intelligent life? We have all these stars, all these galaxies, and yet nothing. We just look out, and we can't find anything other than what we have here on Earth." That was kind of how I felt about AI. It seemed like it should be everywhere. And yet, everywhere I looked, it wasn't. There weren't case studies to be told, there weren't brilliant SAS products being built where AI was just baked in from the ground up.

Paul Roetzer: [00:15:24] There were a bunch of interesting things happening. I was like, "I don't think we can write this yet. I don't know if the story is there yet". Then 2022, a lot changed. So, 2021, I read a book called *Genius Makers* by Cade Metz, and that made clear to me why the Fermi paradox moment was happening for me in 2018, and why the tech wasn't there yet. The breakthroughs hadn't happened yet that have enabled what we're seeing today. So, by late 2021, I was ready to take a shot at telling the story as best I could because I thought it was critical for the industry and the business world at large that a more approachable text existed that wasn't a technical book and that was written for marketers and business leaders. The challenge was—how do you write something when you know the technology is going to obsolete parts of it immediately? We had a very strategic and intentional effort to write a book that would stand the test of time. One of the things, as an example, that I dealt with in one of the chapters was: can AI be creative? I think it's actually the subheading in one of the chapters. I wouldn't change anything I wrote. I wrote that nine months before ChatGPT came out and four months before DALL-E-2 came out, and neither of those things would change what I said. So I think that's good. I think the fundamentals stayed true.

Celisa Steele: [00:16:54] Well, good. That's amazing given, like you said, just how fast technology in the AI field can change. And so, I'm really focusing on those basics and what can stand the test of time. I also appreciate your focus on an approachable and actionable look at AI. Knowing that you are very practical in what you do, I would just love to talk about some of the primary hurdles, obstacles, and risks that you see when it comes to AI. Then, of course, on the flip side, what do you see as some of the biggest advantages and opportunities if organizations embrace AI and use it for, in the case of learning businesses, developing, promoting, and selling their learning products and services?

Paul Roetzer: [00:17:40] Well, let's take the two parts. The first is the limitations and obstacles. Is that correct?

Celisa Steele: [00:17:46] Correct. Yes.

Paul Roetzer: [00:17:48] There are limitations within the technology itself. So there's the assumption that I'm going to go use ChatGPT, and it's just going to magically write all this stuff and it's going to be correct and things like that. That's partially true. But the machine doesn't actually know facts. Right now ChatGPT has no idea of facts. One, it's not connected to the Internet, so it doesn't have anything new since the end of 2021, even in its training set. Two, the way the models work is they predict words. They don't actually know truths. They have no idea of facts and no context to have to even process that information. I think there's this unrealistic expectation of what AI is actually capable of doing. But then there's also an

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underestimation of what it's capable of doing. I don't think they understand the breadth of the impact that's going to have on learning, marketing, sales, service, and product development; learning management systems (LMS), for example, that many of us use. I have a learning management system for our online academy. They're archaic. I've looked around for smarter learning management systems, and I can't find them. So that vertical within the software world is very slow to build smarter technology where you have recommended courses baked in. Think about your experience with Netflix or Spotify, but have that baked into online learning.

Paul Roetzer: [00:19:17] I shouldn't have to set the rules of "She took this course. Now, I'm going to recommend these two courses." It's like it should learn those things, and it should be able to build profiles. I think about this future state, and some of the limitations are that people just haven't built it yet. Then there are just more macro-level limitations, which are some of these big organizations have more advanced technology and they can't release it because of fears of misuse or bias or all these much bigger problems, like ethical concerns about responsible use of AI. Because it goes far beyond just AI writing tools. It has deep impact in a lot of areas. I think that there are those. Then there's just the internal issue of no one understands this stuff, so how are you going to build it into your business? It sounds great that I can go intelligently automate e-mails, scripts, nurturing of learners, or whatever it may be, online advertising. But who on your team gets it and can actually figure this stuff out? So there's a massive lack of understanding and a lack of education in all industries. This is a fundamental problem in business because AI has been taught as a technical ability within universities. It's the only way it's been taught. There aren't AI one-on-one for business classes. There should be. I've been preaching that for five years, but there aren't. So nobody on the business side really understands it, and, therefore, you can't build business strategies around it. That's probably the biggest limitation right now—that leaders of companies just don't even know how to do this. It's unknown to them. That's the limitations in my mind. Then the second part of the question was—what? Remind me again.

Celisa Steele: [00:21:03] About advantages and opportunities if organizations embrace AI.

Paul Roetzer: [00:21:08] Right now, there's a first mover advantage to figure this stuff out before everybody else because we're not talking about incremental gains; we're talking about order of magnitude gains. I've been advising companies of late, like, "You got to stop thinking about 10, 20-percent improvement in efficiency, output, and quality. What does 10X improvement look like?" I wrote a thesis in May of last year, again, pre DALL-E, pre ChatGPT, and it said "the future of business is AI or obsolete." The basic premise is that every business in every industry will either be AI native, meaning you just build a smarter version of that business from the ground up. So if I wanted to build a learning management system today, I could just look at the best ones and say, "They're elementary; here's how you build a smarter learning management system. Let's just infuse AI into every aspect of it from the ground up." And I just build my own learning management system. AI emergent is: "I already have an online education business, and I'm going to figure out how to infuse AI into the marketing, sales, service, product, and every aspect of my business. I'm going to make it smarter over the next two to three years. I'm going to become AI emergent." Then the third kind of company is obsolete. You're irrelevant.

Paul Roetzer [00:22:23] It's not going to happen overnight. Business models aren't going to go under just in six months, 12 months, or whatever. But over time, if your peer groups do build

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smarter businesses, your ability to remain competitive will crumble because they're not improving by 10, 20-percent; they're improving by 100-percent or more in terms of their productivity, efficiency, creativity, and decision-making. I have yet to find an industry where I don't think this will be true. That's where I think the opportunity is to be the ones that become AI emergent—to figure this out now. Over time, you don't have to flip a switch and become all AI overnight. You don't have to solve all of this right away. But you can learn the fundamentals of this stuff applied to business in your industry, in your focus in weeks. You don't have to go back to school. You don't need a degree in this stuff. It's just learning to look at problems differently, learning to look at how to run your business in a smarter way.

Celisa Steele: [00:23:16] I've seen some of your writing around these 5Ps of AI marketing. I just think that would be really interesting and useful for listeners. Would you just explain what those 5Ps are and how AI gets used in those areas?

Paul Roetzer: [00:23:31] The planning, production, personalization, promotion, and performance are the five Ps. The reason they exist is because back in 2016-17 when we first started the institute, we were looking around and trying to find AI technology, and we would find these vendors and then we were trying to figure out what category do they fit in. Let's say, HubSpot, for example. HubSpot in their early days, even today, had like eight to 10 AI features within the whole platform. So, the platform itself has 90 or 100 or whatever number of tools. 10 of them were using AI. If you wanted to say, "Okay, HubSpot has some AI, but how is it using it? Is it in e-mail? Is it in advertising or social media?" And so, I just stepped back and said, "Okay, if you're a CMO or an executive in business and you're trying to think about the different ways you can apply AI at a very macro level, what is it that we do? What were you planning?" It could be a business strategy; it could be pricing; it could be content strategy. It could get into all these different areas. But we build plans, then we produce things. It could be content; it could be ads; it could be social media shares; it could be whatever. Any of these categories. It could be content for our courses. So you have production. Then you need to use AI to do personalization. I want to go beyond just sending the same stuff to 10,000 people. Whether it's through my online chat experience, my ads, or copywriting in my e-mails, I need to personalize that stuff, and AI enables personalization.

Paul Roetzer: [00:25:08] Promotion is: how are we going to get the word out about this? We're going to distribute, we're going to send our e-mails, do our social media shares; we can do all these things. Then performance is: how do I move from manually having to review the analytics data to having the AI surface insights and recommendations for me? Because it's arduous to have to go in and look at all these charts and spreadsheets. I want that surfaced for me. We started seeing these five buckets that you could take all these technologies and think of them as like, is this a planning tool? Is it a production tool? Is it a tool that can help me personalize experiences? Is it something I'm going to use to help promote my courses and my content, or is it something that's going to help me analyze performance? I've never felt those five things were it. We were always going to categorize those that way. But it helped me in the early days develop clarity around the different macro-level ways that AI could be applied in business. And so, we've continued to reference them. But I wouldn't say they're fundamental today to how we position AI. I don't talk about it in my intro courses and things like that, but we did include it in the book just to give people that perspective.

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Celisa Steele: [00:26:26] If a learning business is looking to really get started with leveraging AI to help it market its educational products and services, what would you recommend? Are there some obvious places or use cases to start with?

Paul Roetzer: [00:26:41] I would just start with smarter, more intelligent, automated versions of what you're already doing. So the best way I always look at it is what we would call a use case model. You take a spreadsheet, here are the technical things we do to create our courses, to market our courses, whatever it is. Here's how many hours a month we spend doing those things. Here's the tech we're using to help us; and here's how much we would value having AI help us with this. If you're spending 50 hours a month on e-mail, segmentation, manual personalization, sending, reviewing the e-mail reports, trying to improve open rates and click rates. If you're investing a bunch of time in e-mail, maybe it's 500 hours, I don't know, that might be a really good place to start. Is there a smarter way to do e-mail? Whether it's just writing our subject lines for us or personalizing send time. Or we can do a smart newsletter where our 500 learners or 5,000 learners get personalized versions of the e-mail. So, the same e-mail newsletter doesn't go out to everybody at the same time with the same links. It actually starts to learn what things are interesting to that person. I always tell people, start with what you already do. The easiest way to understand the impact of AI is to look at a current workflow or process. Let's say it's podcasting. It's a huge one. We use AI five different ways in our podcast. We have 17 specific steps for every single podcast. We looked at it and said, "Which of these steps can be intelligence automated to some degree?"

Paul Roetzer: [00:28:05] We use Descript as the main tool to do it, but we infused it into that specific use case. Transcription, speaker recognition in the transcripts, summarization of the transcripts, converting it into blog posts, so we'll draft the blog post, all of these things. It's saved a massive amount of time because the podcast is a core part of our promotion. Again, we have an online education business, so we try and drive people to a conversion point to where they actually want to buy the online classes and become a member of the online academy. So I just say, start with what you do. I always talk about it in user stories. Today, someone spends 40 hours every month doing these 17 steps. If we can buy Descript, it's going to help us do six of those, and that's going to save this person 20 hours. So, 30 days from now, this person will now do the same 17 steps with the help of AI in half the time. Great. Let's do it. Let's go spend the \$29 a month for Descript. Let's commit to trying it over 60 days, learning how to actually use the tool, doing a little onboarding, and let's see if we can get that 50-percent improvement or whatever that number is. That's how you start. You pick very tangible things where you're going to be very clear on did it work or did it not. You don't just want to go get a bunch of AI tools just to say you're using AI.

Celisa Steele: [00:29:28] If you go back to your thesis about "that AI are obsolete," this idea of picking these use cases, looking for somewhere where you're spending a lot of time thinking about an AI tool that might be able to help you reduce that. Is that how you get to that AI emergent business?

Paul Roetzer: [00:29:42] That's how you start. There are two parallel paths. The one is the use case model, which I think about quick wins, very narrow specific use cases. I like to tell people, do them in four-month sprints, give yourself 30 days to really assess the use case, look at a few different technologies, get the tech, get onboarded, and then 90 days to run it and see if it worked or not. Then you either keep it or get rid of it at the end of 90 days. You want to start

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with one, but maybe you got two or three of those projects going on simultaneously. You're constantly testing these tech. You're not committing long-term; you're just testing. The second and critical element to AI emergent is a problem-based model, which is you're looking at larger-scale issues in the organization. Our churn rate is 80-percent above where it needs to be to make this a sustainable business. Our conversion rate on members who take the first class but don't convert to full membership in the academy is way below where it needs to be. These fundamental things where it's like, what can we do different to solve this problem? So you define the problem and then you say, "What is the value to solve it?" Now you have a larger business case say, "Okay, we think if we can improve our conversion rate two percentage points, we can generate another \$100,000 in revenue this year.

Paul Roetzer: [00:31:02] "It's worth it for us to spend three months trying to figure this out. Even if we have to spend \$50,000 in consulting fees and tech, we're going to see that money back if this works." Basically, it's looking at problems and saying, what is a smarter way to solve this? But those are bigger picture. They have greater value to the organization. It might be a series of tools and AI use cases combined. I always say you want to have those two paths parallel. You want to have quick wins with the use cases, and you want to be working on bigger problems. I generally advise one to two per year, per business function. So the marketing team is working on something, or the operations team is trying something, but you don't want to have too much going on where you're not actually going to make any progress.

Celisa Steele: [00:31:47] You've mentioned this a little bit. The fact that you have resources to help folks learn about AI in marketing, and maybe you can share a little bit more about that. You've also said, too, that people aren't getting taught this in school. There's not really a course. How would a learning business, again, that wants to take it seriously, you know, they're going to do some of these quick one-use cases, they're going to maybe think about the problems as well. But just how do they help their team understand what's possible, or get familiar with the tools, or whatever they need to know to be able to start leveraging AI for marketing?

Paul Roetzer: [00:32:21] I'm not here to promote what we're doing at the institute. It is what we've been trying to solve there, I would say. We have thought through that learning journey of someone who was told internally, "Hey, we have to figure out this AI thing. Who's tried ChatGPT? Can you figure out AI for us?" All of a sudden, some associate is in charge of solving AI for the company, or it's the CMO, who is in a peer group, and their peers is all anyone's talking about, and they need to solve it for their team. So, we have to think about personal growth, business growth, and team growth. We've tried to devise step-by-step learning journeys for those kinds of people. And that's what we have done. What I would say is you're going to need, and, especially if you have bigger teams, you're going to need some sort of dedicated AI internal training program, and that could be a collection of existing online resources, paid and/or free resources. It could be a book club. It could be an experiential thing. It could be bringing in an outside consultant. You have to decide your business, the budget you have available, the impact that you believe this is going to have on your team in the near future. Then you've got to go.

Paul Roetzer: [00:33:34] I would say for our piloting the "AI for Marketers" course, which is like the series we created as this step-by-step journey, we launched it in December. We had a lot of individual learners, people who are at big corporations and small, who are trying to figure it out for themselves because they see an opportunity. Then you get an e-mail yesterday with

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somebody saying, “I want 40 licenses. I want to put 20 of my team members through it in the first phase, and I want 20 more after that.” So you start to see the organizations that are looking at “we have to level up now, everyone.” Again, we’re talking about online learning and learning professionals here. We all get it. You can go after the individuals and try and create change agents, or sometimes you get lucky and you get the people who have the vision to transform organizations and teams. I think we’re at the stage with how quickly this is all going to move. People have to have a vision to transform and upskill teams. It’s going to be essential. You can’t hire these people. You have to upskill people.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:33] This is the Leading Learning Podcast, and so we always like to ask guests who join us about their own lifelong learning and how they pursue that. I would love to hear if you have habits, practices, or resources that you draw on for your own lifelong learning. Of course, I’d be especially interested to know what role AI might play in your development learning plan.

Paul Roetzer: [00:34:55] I am a huge believer in the importance of ongoing learning. Even when I own my agency, I hired a lot of people straight out of college and preached heavily to them that the only reason I was in the position I was in... I started the agency when I was 27. In my early to mid-thirties is because when I got out of college, that’s when the learning started for me. I wasn’t the greatest student in college. I did my work and got good grades, but I just did it to pass the test for the most part. When I got out of college and started finding a purpose, then I became very intentional about what I learned. I didn’t go back for an MBA. I didn’t see the value in that in our industry, but I read everything. I would just be like, “Okay, I want to learn branding now,” and I go find the five best books on branding. Or, “I want to learn how to be a better strategist,” and I go find the best books on strategy. So in the early days, that which I missed, that meant walking into Borders and buying five books on a Friday night. That was my learning after college. Today, I would say it’s a heavy mix of audiobooks, and I have a very specific set of podcasts I’d listen to, and I force myself to do it.

Paul Roetzer: [00:36:06] The reason I do audiobooks is I force myself in downtimes to learn. So when I’m at the gym, when I’m in the car, or when I’m laying in bed at night, I often listen to stuff. When I’d probably rather be playing video games or listening to music, I forced myself to learn. Then if the books are good, I buy the digital version and reread them, highlight, and then I export the notes. Then I synthesize the notes and use that for inspiration. Today, I would say a lot of that. I actually use Twitter; believe it or not, it is my primary learning vehicle for AI, because the beauty of Twitter right now is that many of the leading AI researchers and scientists are actually active on Twitter, and they share their inside thoughts about what’s going on. So I connect a lot of dots about the state of AI and where it’s going by listening to what they’re saying and then trying to understand why they’re saying it now. That’s what I’ve learned through the years. They have their own way of saying things, and many times they’re giving warnings or they’re tipping their hand at what’s coming. If you know how to interpret what they’re saying, you can actually get there early. And so, that’s how I learned.

Celisa Steele: [00:37:21] Well, thank you, Paul, so much. This has been great. Anything else from your side before we officially wrap up?

Paul Roetzer: [00:37:28] We’re talking to people who teach for a living and help other people learn. To me, curiosity is the key to learning, and it is absolutely the key to understanding AI. If

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you have some level of curiosity—maybe this is the first time you’re really sitting down and listening to something about AI—just pick the part of it that seems fascinating to you and pursue that thread. You don’t have to learn all this stuff. You don’t have to be able to give a talk like this or anything. Just find the part that’s relevant to your domain and pursue it. Pick one thing, and I think you’ll find that it probably holds a world of potential for you in your business.

Jeff Cobb: [00:38:12] Paul Roetzer is the founder and CEO of Marketing AI Institute. You’ll find a link to the institute’s Web site and Paul’s LinkedIn profile in the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode346.

Celisa Steele: [00:38:27] We encourage you to check out Marketing AI Institute’s Web site, as they offer a lot of actionable, practical resources on AI, including a podcast on AI. And if you reach out to Paul on LinkedIn, mention that you heard him on the Leading Learning Podcast, and he’ll be sure to accept your connection.

Jeff Cobb: [00:38:45] If you enjoyed this episode or if you enjoy the podcast in general, we’d be grateful if you’d rate the Leading Learning Podcast on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen. Celisa and I would personally appreciate it, it doesn’t take much time, and those ratings help others find the show. Go to leadinglearning.com/apple to leave a rating.

Celisa Steele: [00:39:06] And please spread the word about Leading Learning. You can do that in a one-on-one conversation with a colleague or a personal note, or you can do it through social media. In the show notes at leadinglearning.com/episode346, you’ll find links to connect with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Jeff Cobb: [00:39:24] Thanks for listening, and we’ll see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

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

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