Composing with GenAI in TechComm

Insights from Digital Marketing

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Hello.

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Overview

1 **Introduction**
- ◇ Web management
- ◇ Digital marketing
- ◇ Technical communication

2 **Digital Ad Creation**
- ◇ Content strategy & SEO
- ◇ Audience analysis
- ◇ Ad elements

3 **ML and AI in Digital Ads**
- ◇ Landing page training
- ◇ Search and social ads
- ◇ AI-generated ad elements

4 **Composing with AI**
- ◇ Ad element suggestions
- ◇ Editorial role
- ◇ Measure after deployment

5 **Insights for TechComm**
- ◇ HAT
- ◇ Co-authorship
- ◇ Shared rhetorical agency

6 **Implications**
- ◇ Pedagogy
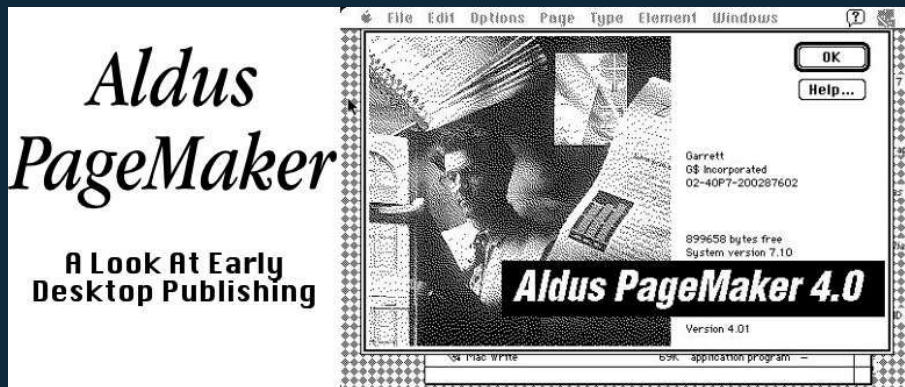- ◇ Practice
- ◇ Research

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1

Introduction

On my journey to technical communication, and why I think it matters.

Web Manager

◇ Self-taught web developer via desktop publishing
◇ HTML class using Notepad & Mosaic browser

https://personal.garrettfuller.org/blog/2021/05/24/aldus-pagemaker-a-look-at-early-desktop-publishing/

Digital Marketer

◇ Web content management lands in marketing "team"
- Content
- Code
- (Infra)structure

◇ Social media and organic reach

◇ Paid online reach and findability

Technical Communication

◇ PhD program and an accidental surprise
  ▪ Subfield of English studies at ODU
  ▪ Network theory and technical communication
◇ *Wait, I think I might be a technical communicator!*

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

https://www.odu.edu/english/graduate/phd-english

Perspective

I study and practice technical communication through the lenses of...

◇ Rhetorical agency
◇ Web development
◇ Digital marketing

Plus a Few Theories

From Sociology: Actor-Network-Theory

Agency and meaning-making are shared among human and non-human actors.

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 2005 (Oxford Univ. Press)

From Comm Design: Assemblage Agency

Agency cannot be attributed to a single rhetor, but to rhetorical assemblages.

Brian McNely & Nathaniel Rivers, "All of the Things: Engaging Complex Assemblages in Communication Design," 2014 (ACM SIGDOC'14)

From Rhetoric: Distributed Agency

Agency as multiple forces simultaneously producing rhetorical agency.

Nathan R. Johnson, "Rhetorica Re-View: Five Approaches to Rhetorical Agency," 2025 (*Rhetoric Review* 44.1)
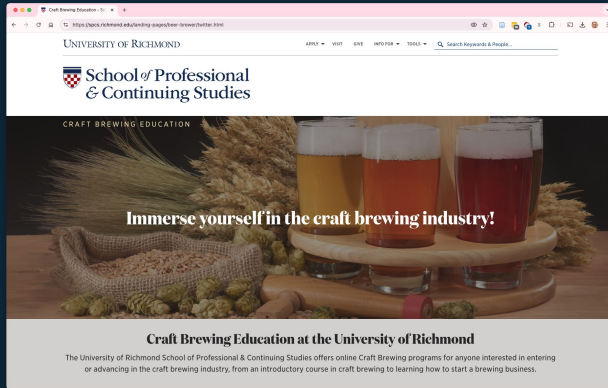
2

Digital Ad Creation

A crash course on digital ad creation from a techcomm perspective.

Content Strategy & SEO

◇ Custom landing pages as ad destinations
◇ Content designed for the target audience
◇ Page focuses on a single call to action
◇ Page adheres to brand guidelines
◇ Structured content understood by web bots
◇ SEO ensures content is findable and indexed

Audience Analysis

◇ Clearly identify target audience by interests, region and demographics

◇ Use personas and user data from existing audiences for targeting

◇ Conduct audience research to ensure match among product/service, customer/user, and ad content

Ad Elements

- ◇ Headline (a few words)
- ◇ Subheading (a few more words)
- ◇ Description (more words)
- ◇ Keyword (search) or profile (social)
- ◇ Single call to action (CTA)
- ◇ Imagery
- ◇ Landing page link
- ◇ Link extensions (search)

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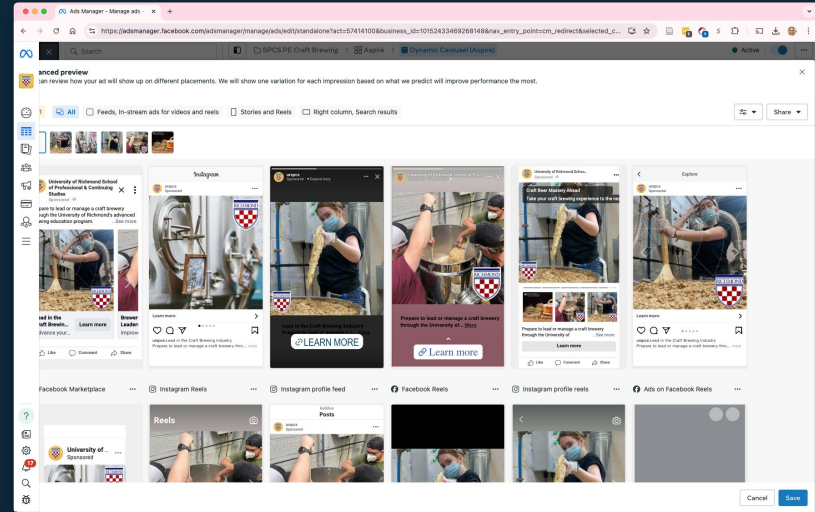
Overlap

Technical communication skills in digital marketing

◇ Audience analysis
◇ Content strategy
◇ IA & content management

3 ML & AI in Digital Ads

How Google Ads and Facebook Ads Manager incorporate ML and AI into their platforms when creating an ad campaign.
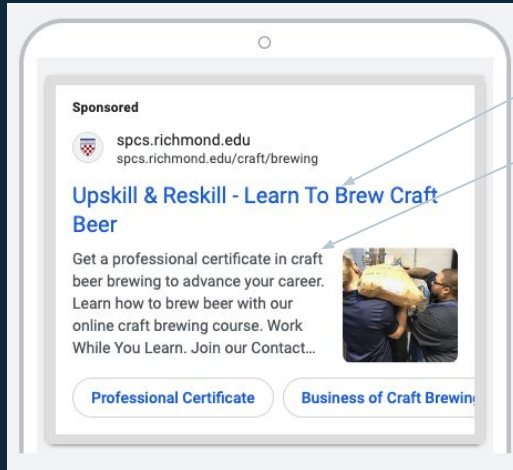
Landing Page Training

◇ Providing website, online catalog, or custom landing page is the first step in creating an ad campaign
◇ Website, catalog or page is analyzed by the platform to learn and identify ad elements:
  ▪ Headings
  ▪ Descriptions
  ▪ Images
  ▪ Conversion actions
  ▪ Target audiences
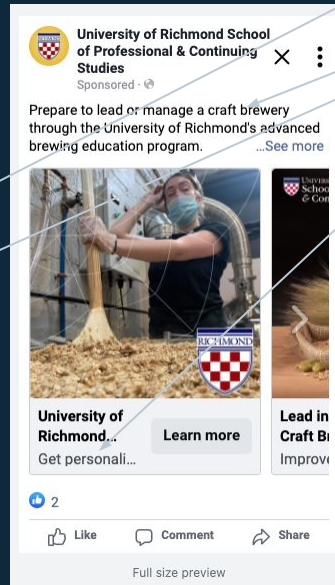 ▪ Keywords and profile characteristics
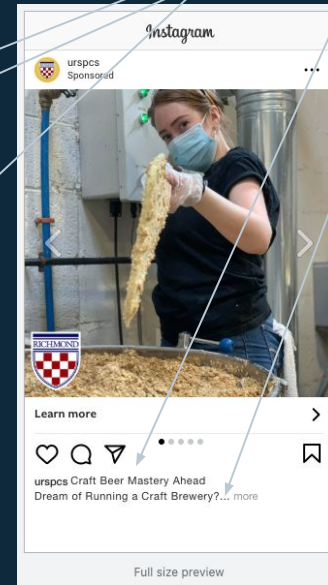
Search & Social Ads

Heading

Description

Google Search

Sponsored

spcs.richmond.edu
spcs.richmond.edu/craft/brewing

Upskill & Reskill - Learn To Brew Craft Beer

Get a professional certificate in craft beer brewing to advance your career. Learn how to brew beer with our online craft brewing course. Work While You Learn. Join our Contact...

Professional Certificate   Business of Craft Brewing

Facebook

University of Richmond School of Professional & Continuing Studies
Sponsored ·

Prepare to lead or manage a craft brewery through the University of Richmond's advanced brewing education program.
...See more

University of Richmond...   Learn more
Get personali...

Lead in
Craft Br
Improve

 2

Like   Comment   Share

Full size preview

Instagram

Instagram

urspcs
Sponsored

Learn more

urspcs Craft Beer Mastery Ahead Dream of Running a Craft Brewery?... more

Full size preview

Google Search   Facebook   Instagram

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AI-generated Ad Elements

◇ Based on what the platform learns from the website, catalog or landing page, suggestions, AI recommends ad elements.

◇ Combinations are previewed, but not guaranteed to appear as previewed.

◇ Only after deployment can actual combinations be viewed and measured

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Integrated

Digital marketing platforms integrate AI deeply into their functions

◇ Tracking user behavior
◇ Keyword profiling
◇ Multimedia composing

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Composing with AI

Creating digital ads has become the practice of composing with AI.

Keyword and asset generation

Keyword and asset generation ⌃

Get help creating your ad BETA

Google AI will use your URL and the information you provide to create assets, like keywords, headlines, and descriptions for you to review. Generated content may be inaccurate or offensive, so please review and check the responses. To improve Google AI, human reviewers may read, annotate, and process the information you provide. Don't enter anything you wouldn't want reviewed or used.

Your use is subject to Google's Terms of Service and Generative AI Additional Terms of Service. Your data is handled as explained in the Google Privacy Policy.

Where will people go when they click your ad?

🔗 Final URL (required)*

Keyword and asset generation is only available in English

☆ **Create a catalog and drive more sales with Advantage+ catalog ads**

Use a catalog to automatically advertise relevant products or services to people based on their unique interests, intent and actions. Learn more

Get started   Remind me later

Advantage+ creative text generation (5 of 5) ✦ AI
View Terms of Use

📈 Advertisers who used text variations for their campaigns saw 1.77% higher clickthrough rate. ⓘ

✔ Apply all text variations

✔ Want to tap into the craft beer industry? Unlock a career in brewery leadership with our professional certificate program! Learn the business of brewing and take your passion to the next level. Apply now!

✔ Dream of Running a Craft Brewery?

Take the first step with University of Richmond's advanced brewing education program! Earn your professional certificate in craft beer brewing and learn

👍 👎   🔄 Generate more

Ad Element Suggestion

◇ Depending on platform, ad elements are recommended.
- May start with a single entry created by the writer
- May start with AI-generated suggestions approved by the writer

◇ Note the recommendation to use AI
- Meta: Advantage+ creative text generation for descriptions and headlines; Advantage+ catalog creation
- Google: Automatically created keywords and ad assets

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Editorial Role for Communicator

◇ To use AI or not (sometimes not a choice)
◇ To select AI-generated content
◇ To optimize ad asset combinations post-deployment
◇ To determine whether AI integration improves or degrades ad quality and performance
◇ To know how to work around genAI as a preferred default
  ▪ Google: "This recommendation is an AI-essential"
  ▪ Meta: "Advertisers who used text variations for their campaigns saw 1.77% higher clickthrough rate."

Measure after Deployment

Responsive search ad combinations

Last 90 days ▾

Download Feedback

Your ad has 4,869 impressions in the selected time period. Some shortening may also occur in some formats.

Headline
Become a Brewing Professional | Open Your Own Brewery

Description
Get a professional certificate in craft beer brewing to advance your career. Prepare aspiring brewery owners and managers to open their own breweries.

Logo

55 impressions (1%)

Headline
University of Richmond | Online Certification

Description
Get a professional certificate in craft beer brewing to advance your career. Prepare aspiring brewery owners and managers to open their own breweries.

Headline
Become a Brewing Professional | Open Your Own Brewery

Description
Get a professional certificate in craft beer brewing to advance your career.

Logo

Image

Callout
100% Online
Career Specific
Learn More
Join our Contact List

Headline
Open Your Own Brewery | University of Richmond

Description
Get a professional certificate in craft beer brewing to advance your career.

Logo

Image

Callout
100% Online
Career Specific
Learn More
Join our Contact List

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Collaborate

Technical communicators as collaborative creative composing partners with AI

◇ AI is first-pass author
◇ TC is a critical editor
◇ Post-deployment metrics

5 Insights for TechComm

What the techcomm field can glean from work in digital marketing platforms.

Human Autonomous Teams (HAT)

◇ HAT is "humans and intelligent, autonomous agents working interdependently toward a common goal." (O'Neill et al., "Human Autonomy Teaming," *Human Factors* 64.5 (2020)

◇ AI in digital ad platforms represents the intelligent, autonomous agent, while the common goal is meeting the needs of users.

◇ Consider how HAT might impact the way industry practices technical communication. What intelligent, autonomous agents are available for ethical use in tech comm?

Co-Authorship

◇ Recognizing that AI will offer authorial recommendations based on machine learning at computing speeds.

◇ Taking an editorial role in accepting, rejecting, and honing suggestions made by AI agents.

◇ Consider how co-authorship might impact the practice of technical communication. What AI agents would or should we consider trusting in a co-authorial relationship?

Shared Rhetorical Agency

◇ Meaning making emerges from the coalescing of human-led and algorithm-centered communication acts.

◇ Digital ads "mean" when a mix of human-generated and AI-generated assets are combined dynamically, in real time, as a personalized message to the user.

◇ Consider how technical communicators might leverage experience with CCMS to work with AI-generated structured copy to manage dynamic content on support docs. Where does the human-in-the-loop reside?

Insights

Who or what is the rhetor in HAT?

◇ Technical writer as rhetor
◇ Ad platform as rhetor
◇ ML and AI as rhetor
◇ Collective rhetorical agent

6 Implications

Ways the techcomm field is and will be affected by composing with AI.

Pedagogy

◇ How do we teach technical communicators to share rhetorical agency with machine learning algorithms and AI-generated content?

◇ What are the editorial skills we need to provide students to ensure they insert themselves as humans-in-the-loop (HITL) in writing documentation?

◇ What new skills do we as teachers of technical communication need to learn in order to teach?

Practice

◇ What does HAT mean for the future of technical communication authorship?

◇ What standards might technical communicators use to evaluate AI-generated contributions in communication platforms?

◇ How do technical communicators share rhetorical agency without ceding editorial control?

Research

◇ What objects of study should we examine in the race to artificial general intelligence?
- OpenAI & the advances of ChatGPT
- Google and the advances of Gemini
- Microsoft and the advances of Co-Pilot/Bing
- High-Flyer and the advances of DeepSeek

◇ How can we advocate for HILT approaches to generative AI in technical communication?

◇ How do we research, practice, and advocate ethical uses of AI in global AI advancement and AI-generated localization?

How do we prepare the technical communicators of the future to collaborate effectively with AI while retaining rhetorical agency?

What are the guidelines and standards we need to create and share for composing with AI in composing platforms?

Thanks!

Continue the conversation

We can keep chatting at

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Some of My Research to Produce This Talk

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