

How AI-Created ‘Workslop’ Saps Productivity, Irks Co-Workers

Artificial intelligence platforms that generate low-value or inaccurate charts or reports are not only embarrassing, but can also waste resources and erode trust among employees.

By **Ron Shinkman** | November 11, 2025



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Frustration around a spate of low-value, AI-created content in the workplace has led to a new term: workslop.

It might describe that wooden-sounding strategy summary you just received that Google's Gemini actually drafted, or those ideas for a new project that a colleague sent over after feeding ChatGPT a bunch of prompts.

In short, workslop is "AI generated work content that masquerades as good work, but lacks the substance to meaningfully advance a given task," researchers from **Stanford University** and the consulting firm **BetterUp** wrote in the September Harvard Business Review in coining the word.

Workslop has become pervasive as well as annoying, they discovered. Two-fifths of the more than 1,100 U.S. employees they surveyed claimed to have encountered it. Dealing with the time-sapping content could cost a 10,000-person company more than \$9 million a year in lost productivity, they estimated.

Half of the survey respondents said receiving workslop masquerading as original work annoyed them, and one-fifth said they were even offended. Their colleagues pumping out the stuff aren't held in very high esteem either: 37% in the poll perceived them as less intelligent.

Workslop can take various forms. It can be a document or chart that appears professional at a glance, but muddied if not incomprehensible upon further inspection. It reminds **Phil Le-Brun**, an executive in residence with **Amazon Web Services** in the United Kingdom and co-author of "The Octopus Organization," somewhat of **Microsoft's PowerPoint**.

At the turn of the 21st century, PowerPoint became the scourge of businesses and leaders for purportedly dumbing down meetings and presentations. Military commanders grumbled that PowerPoint slide decks oversimplified complex operations, imperiling planning and management. Some companies even restricted use of the program.

Workslop "turns out a great-looking product, but it's often meaningless," Le-Brun said. "It doesn't have any sort of deep insight."

The Threats AI Workslop Pose

Workslop could hurt an insurer's operations in a number of ways, such as if an AI tool fabricated information when compiling an underwriting report for assessing risk.

"There's a lot of risk for taking such a shortcut," said **Jana Werner**, another Amazon Web Services executive who co-wrote "The Octopus Organization" with Le-Brun. "You're getting polished and easy-to-read documents, but they then may create a false sense of clarity."

A big problem is that large language learning models driving AI engines are designed more to be predictive than fact-based. As a result, the overarching mission of AI is to sound more coherent and plausible in its interactions than accurate or even truthful.

Nevertheless, businesses across America are feverishly exploring how to hitch their workers to artificial intelligence "helpers" to try to boost productivity. The pressure to employ AI is relentless; a recent [report](#) by **McKinsey** declared that "insurers that merely dabble in AI risk being left in the dust, unable to keep up with their AI-native peers."

As AI use becomes more widespread, there is the potential for memoranda and reports being written and presentations being put together that aren't wholly factual, or that are confusing or lack relevance. The risk could be higher for younger employees who are more comfortable with AI assistants, according to **John Rodgers**, chief operating officer and managing partner of **SSA & Co.**, a consulting firm specializing in performance improvement, operations strategy, and digital transformation.

"They're definitely quicker on the uptake, but they're also more naïve," he said, adding that older employees tend to be more skeptical and may more closely check the work product, or avoid AI altogether.

Workslop doesn't just make for an uncomfortable presentation. When it enters into a company's workflow, the results can be damaging, according to **Jo Deal**, chief people officer at **Smartsheet**, a company based in Bellevue, Wash., that offers platforms to increase company efficiency.

"Teams spend extra time clarifying, rewriting, or duplicating work. Trust erodes as people question each other's judgment," Deal said. "That's the real cost: time lost and confidence shaken."

One of the biggest problems, according to Rodgers, is that many companies open their internal AI platforms to many or all employees, which can create enormous headaches if not managed appropriately.

Proper Education Is Needed

"Everybody is experimenting and investigating with AI, and that's going to create a lot of problems if you don't properly educate them on its use," he said.

However, just scheduling a few classes or town halls on AI usage isn't going to be enough to ensure that workslop doesn't start causing issues.

Jana Farmer, an attorney and partner with the firm **Wilson Elser** in White Plains, N.Y., advocates strong internal governance of AI usage and policies. Companies really don't have a choice, she added, because "there is no legal guidance that would tell you this is what you have to do internally in order to make sure that your employees are not doing something stupid or bad with AI."

Good AI governance should involve mandatory vetting of any AI-generated work products by a human being before being distributed internally or to the public.

Management must also "set clear expectations for how and when to use AI, build regular review checkpoints into projects, and create connected workflows to ensure context and accountability are maintained," Deal said.

Meanwhile, the newly minted term "workslop" has attracted a lot of attention, perhaps partly because it highlights an old form of workplace behavior that stretches back for centuries: people sloughing off their duties to co-workers, who then must clean up their mess.

"The insidious effect of workslop is that it shifts the burden of the work downstream, requiring the receiver to interpret, correct, or redo the work," the Harvard Business Review researchers wrote.

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