



Inside This Issue

- 1 | Harnessing the Power of AI
- 4 | Graduation Season: A Great Time to Review Money Basics
- 6 | Calling All Taxpayers: Plan Now or Pay Later
- 8 | Safeguarding Your Business's Cash with Segregation of Duties

Harnessing the Power of AI:

Transforming Small Businesses and Nonprofits

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a game-changer for businesses of all sizes, including small enterprises and nonprofit organizations. Everywhere you look people are talking about AI chat bots like ChatGPT, Bard, and BingAI. The most difficult part is that the headlines tend to be so dramatic...

['Google killer' ChatGPT sparks AI chatbot race](#)

[Lifesaver or job killer? Why AI tools like ChatGPT are so polarizing](#)

[Bing, Bard, and ChatGPT: AI chatbots are rewriting the internet](#)

Rather than trying to forecast how businesses are going to be using AI over the next decade, I am here

Continues on page 2



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to give you a leg up now. Here are some actionable steps to start incorporating AI into your operations today to unlock your full potential.

Streamlining Operations and Workflow Efficiency

AI-powered tools can revolutionize the way small businesses and nonprofits manage their day-to-day operations. By automating repetitive tasks, AI streamlines workflows and frees up valuable time for teams to focus on strategic initiatives. Here are some actionable steps to get started:

- Identify areas for automation: Analyze your existing processes and identify tasks that can be automated, such as data entry, document processing, customer support, or inventory management. This area should focus on repeatable tasks that you or a staff member do on a routine basis – the more routine the task, the greater the advantage of using AI!
- Explore AI-powered solutions: Research and implement AI tools and software that align with your organization's specific needs. Examples include chatbots for customer service, workflow automation platforms, or intelligent data analytics systems.

Some of the systems have AI integrations, too. For example, you can integrate a platform like ChatGPT into your website or use it as a virtual assistant.

- Optimize resource allocation: Utilize AI algorithms to optimize resource allocation, such as scheduling software for staff management or predictive analytics for inventory forecasting.

Enhancing Customer Engagement and Personalization

AI enables small businesses and nonprofits to deliver personalized experiences that resonate with their target audience. By leveraging AI-driven insights and automation, organizations can deepen customer engagement and build long-lasting relationships. Here's how you can leverage AI for customer-centric strategies:

- Implement some AI-powered chatbots: Integrate chatbots on your website or social media platforms to provide instant customer support and assistance. These virtual assistants can handle routine inquiries, freeing up human agents to focus on more complex tasks. All you need to do is train the bots on frequently asked questions and the general knowledge of your business and let them go

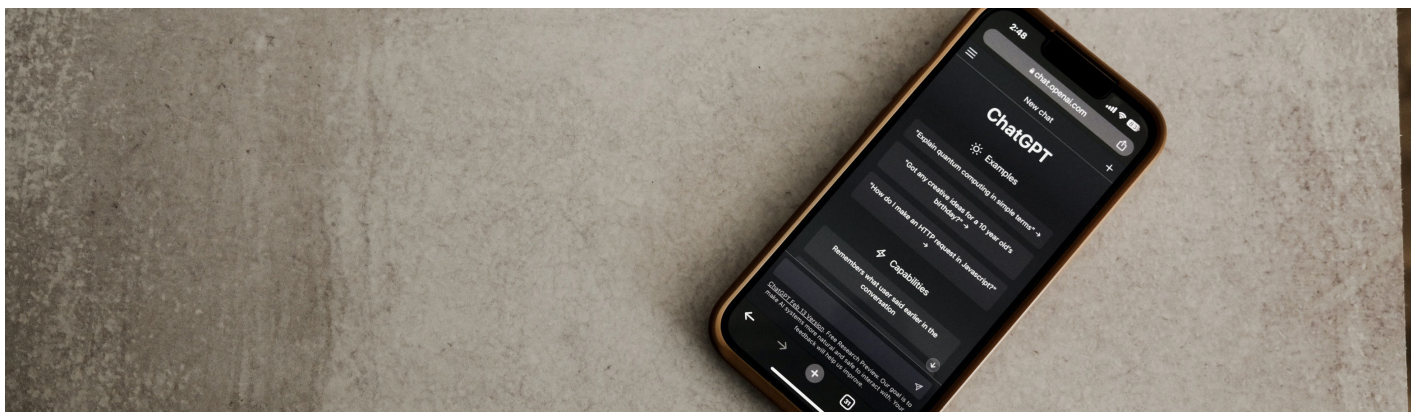
to work. Over time, the bots will gain more knowledge and be able to handle more questions.

- Leverage predictive analytics: Utilize AI-driven analytics to understand customer behavior, preferences, and purchase patterns. Tailor your marketing campaigns and content accordingly to enhance customer engagement and drive conversions. Don't let anecdotal information drive your decision making – use actual data. AI can help you to make better business decisions and drive revenue!
- Personalize recommendations and offers for customers: Leverage various AI algorithms to deliver personalized product recommendations and customized offers to individual customers. This level of personalization can significantly boost customer satisfaction and loyalty. For most small businesses, this is an impossible task. There is simply too much data to review and analyze. Let the AI do the heavy lifting and help you to engage better with your clients.

Data-Driven Decision Making

AI enables small businesses and nonprofits to harness the power of data for informed decision-making. By leveraging AI algorithms,

Continues on page 3



organizations can derive actionable insights from vast amounts of information and optimize their strategies accordingly. Here are the steps to embrace data-driven decision-making:

- **Gather and centralize data:** Collect and consolidate data from various sources, such as customer interactions, sales records, website analytics, and social media metrics. Utilize data management tools to streamline the process. The free versions of the AI chatbots have a maximum amount of information you can input at once, but if you upgrade to a paid plan, you can dump in your data and have the AI review and provide insights.
- **Implement AI analytics tools:** Employ AI-powered analytics platforms to find

valuable insights from your data. These tools can provide meaningful patterns, trends, and predictions to drive decision-making. My favorite part is that it finds trends on its own. There are some trends (such as seasonality) that are predictable, but there are others (like customer behavior) that are much more granular.

- **Optimize operations with AI insights:** Utilize AI-driven insights to optimize pricing strategies, inventory management, marketing campaigns, and resource allocation. By making data-driven decisions, small businesses and nonprofits can achieve greater efficiency and competitiveness. This is also a way to provide deep level insights without having to perform the work manually.

AI doesn't have to be viewed as either completely negative or a remedy to all problems. In reality, the majority of outcomes will likely fall somewhere in between. However, waiting to use AI can set your organization back significantly in the long haul. There are ready-made solutions that can help you improve processes and reduce manual work for you and your staff. The people I work with from nonprofits and small businesses are often wearing many hats and regularly at capacity: start using AI to enjoy the benefits!

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Takeaways

- AI streamlines operations, optimizes resource allocation.
- AI enhances customer engagement, personalization, loyalty.
- AI enables data-driven decision making for various areas.
- Embracing AI improves efficiency, offers ready-made solutions.





Graduation Season: A Great Time to Review Money Basics

With graduation season just around the corner, now it's a great time to review five key money basics for both students and the entire family.

Understand Your Net Worth.

Get used to making this calculation at least once per year. It equals everything you own minus everything you owe others. For young graduates, this number will probably be negative due to debts, which is ok. The key is to measure this number over time and set a goal to improve it each year. Positive net worth opens many doors, including the ability to start a business, get a first home, or even lower your car insurance bill.

Understand Basic Money Mechanics.

Review and understand a paycheck, along with learning about the basics of Social Security, Medicare, and common withholdings to pay for taxes. Then review and understand basic banking products.

Continues on page 5



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Actively managing your cash in today's high inflation environment can yield meaningful interest income, something long missing from banks. Learn how to review and catch banking errors or fraud, and understand how your debit and credit cards work, as well as overdraft protection.

Carefully Manage Debt.

It is easy to burden yourself under a pile of debt. Credit card companies will fight each other to get their credit card in your hands. And they love when you carry a balance on their card. If you do carry a balance, you are often paying 2 to 5 times the cost for every purchase you make. So ALWAYS pay the credit card bill in full each

month. The next debt mountain built is from student loans. While unavoidable for many, try to minimize the size of the loans as much as possible.

Understand Basic Expenses.

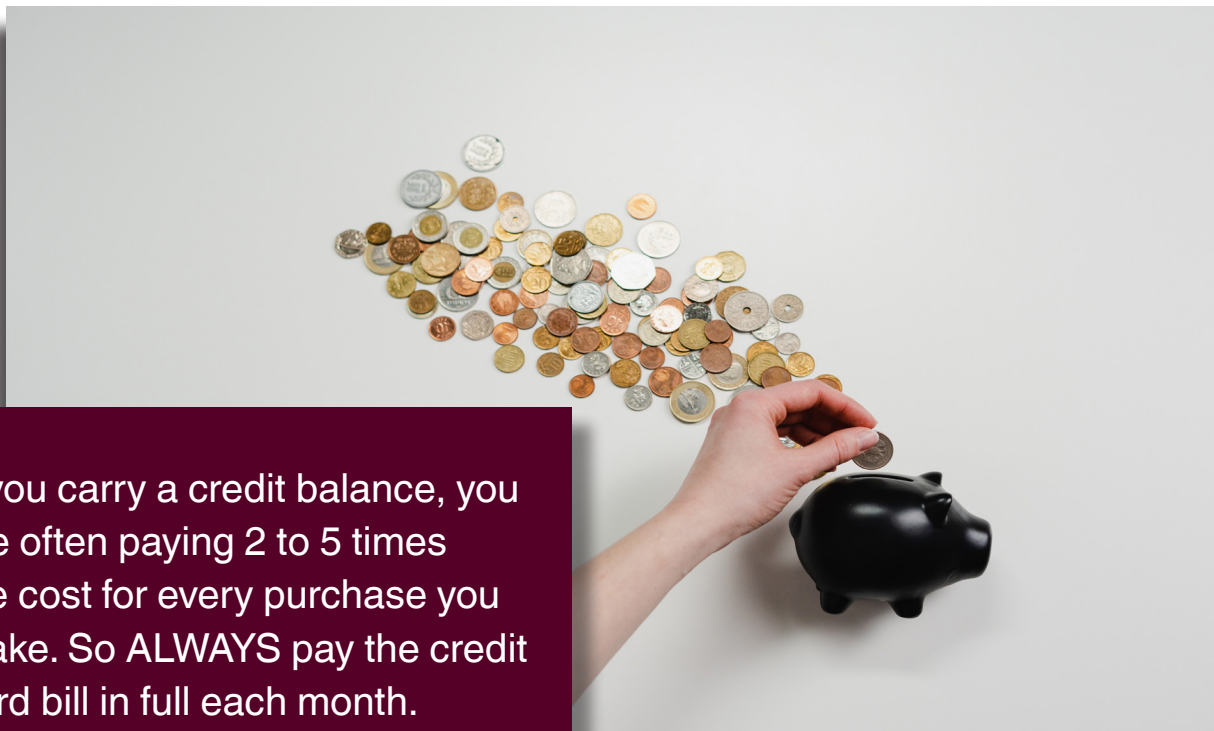
Food, transportation, utilities, insurance, taxes, rent, and medical expenses are just several examples of everyday expenses. The best way to understand these expenses is by creating a budget. Then, before every big decision, research the costs and talk to people that have been in your shoes so you see how it fits into your budget. In addition to recurring expenses, plan to save three-to-six months of expenses for unforeseen emergencies.

Invest in Yourself.

Remember, your most valuable asset is you. So invest in things that make you more employable and provide greater lifelong income earning potential. The best return is often one that is made to create a better future. The world of money and finance can seem overly complicated. So keep asking questions and seek advice until you fully understand the mechanics of money and how it impacts your situation. You'll be amazed at how powerful that feeling can be.

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Calling All Taxpayers: Plan Now or Pay Later

Procrastination is easy, especially when it comes to summertime tax planning. But waiting to implement strategies to reduce your 2023 tax obligations could cost you money. Here are some suggestions to help jumpstart your midyear review:

- Safeguard your deductions. Ensure you can take deductions by keeping great records throughout the year. You'll need proof if you want tax breaks for things like childcare expenses, charitable contributions, gambling losses, vehicle costs and travel expenses. So create a system to keep track of these expenses.
- Save more for retirement. You can save more for retirement in 2023 thanks to inflation increasing annual contribution limits. You've even got time to increase the amount you set aside over the remainder of 2023. This year you can deposit up to \$22,500 in your 401(k) and \$6,500 into your IRA (additional catch-up contributions apply if you're 50 or older). You can also contribute to both a 401(k) and an IRA, though tax deductibility on IRA contributions may be limited depending on your income.
- Be tax-savvy about school savings. If you're setting aside money in a taxable account to pay for your child's school expenses, you could realize tax savings by opening a 529 education savings account. The sooner you do this, the sooner your earnings will start growing tax-deferred. Your earnings will also generally be tax-free when withdrawals are used for qualified education expenses.

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Waiting to implement strategies to reduce your 2023 tax obligations could cost you money.



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Continues on page 7

- Adjust your withholdings and estimated payments. If you haven't already, update your withholdings and estimated tax payments to reflect any changes needed since last year. Updates may be in order if you experience a big life event, such as marriage, divorce or a new job. Overpaying your 2023 tax reduces the cash you have on hand throughout the year, and underpaying can lead to penalties and interest.

Please reach out to us if you have questions about your tax planning for your 2023 tax return.



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TAKEAWAYS

- Timely planning saves money: Avoid procrastination, reduce financial losses.
- Deductions and records: Keep meticulous records for deductions.
- Optimize contributions in 2023 to maximize tax advantages.





Safeguarding Your Business's Cash with Segregation of Duties

Fraud and embezzlement don't just happen at large companies. In fact, theft may be more common in small businesses because many lack internal controls that are typically in place at larger organizations. But the good news is that effective internal controls don't have to be complicated or expensive.

The best way for small businesses to battle fraud is to create a segregation of duties framework. With segregation of duties, you have one person responsible for each of three different areas: Authorization of cash expenditures, physical custody of cash and reconciliation of cash expenditures.

Here's what you need to know:

Segregate Cash Disbursements.

Only a designated, trusted manager should sign checks, authorize electronic payments, or perform fund transfers. This control has a dual purpose: management sees how the company is spending its money, and the cash disbursement function is kept separate from bookkeeping and accounting. The opportunity to embezzle is much higher if the same person signs checks, authorizes electronic transactions, and enters disbursement transactions in the accounting records. You can strengthen this function by having solid purchase order policies and having separate functions approving bills. Then the person who signs checks or authorizes transactions can ensure the payment is approved prior to disbursing the cash.

Continues on page 9



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Segregate Control of Cash.

Have an owner or manager occasionally spot check incoming electronic transactions and tie them to the company bank account. If you receive physical checks, have an owner or manager open the mail before passing it on to accounting. That's one way to detect unusual transactions before they're recorded in the company books. Alternatively, you might ask someone separate from accounting to open the mail and prepare a deposit slip, or prepare a daily reconciliation of all transactions.

Segregate Reconciliations

For companies with limited resources, a periodic review of bank reconciliations by someone outside of accounting can provide a mitigating control. Non-accounting personnel performing these reviews will need to be trained.

They'll need to understand the risks involved and the types of unusual or unsupported transactions needing further investigation. Cross training staff also helps to ensure continuity of operations when accounting employees take vacations or leave the company. Or better yet, bring in an outside accounting expert to conduct periodic audits of key functions.

Segregation of duties can help your company keep track of cash and help prevent theft by an employee before it happens.

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