I Was Called a Cheater Last Week. My Crime? Using AI to Be More Productive.

Last week, a friend accused me of "cheating" for using ChatGPT to draft a report, Claude Code to create software, Perplexity to analyse information, and Gemini to summarise ideas / create requirement documents. My response? "Did you walk to work this morning, or did you cheat by driving?"

This exchange perfectly captures the unusual double standard we are witnessing as AI transforms the workplace. While we celebrate every other technological advancement, AI somehow gets labelled as "taking the easy way out." It's time we had an honest conversation about this hypocrisy.

The AI Revolution Is Here, And So Is the Resistance

According to Stanford University, AI adoption in the workplace has increased by 270% over the past four years. Yet **45% of managers still believe using AI tools is "taking the easy way out"** (ironically, the same percentage who thought email would never replace fax machines).

Major players like Google, Microsoft, and Salesforce aren't just dabbling in AI, they're betting their futures on it. So why are we still debating whether using these tools is "cheating"?

History Keeps Repeating Itself

Remember When Google Was "Cheating"?

In the 1990s, using the internet for research was considered lazy. "Real researchers use libraries!" they said. Today, **NOT** using Google for research is considered inefficient. Those card catalogues are museum pieces now.

The Secretary Scandal

Having a secretary manage your calendar in the 1960s? "That executive can't even manage his own time!" Fast forward: Today's CEO who doesn't use scheduling software is considered disorganised.

The Calculator Controversy

"Students won't learn real math!" educators cried when calculators entered classrooms. Now? **Excel is a job requirement**, and those who can't use spreadsheets are considered unemployable in finance.

Quick question: If using AI to write emails is cheating, is using spell-check cheating too? Where exactly do we draw the line?

The "Cheating" Myth: Let's Get Real

The notion that AI is "cheating" stems from an outdated equation: **Time Spent = Value Created**. This industrial age thinking has no place in the knowledge economy.

Here's what critics miss:

- **AI doesn't replace thinking**: it increases it
- **AI doesn't eliminate skill**: it demands new ones
- **AI doesn't reduce quality**: it enables consistency at scale

In Finance, We've Already Settled This Debate

We've automated trading, risk assessment, and fraud detection. Nobody calls that cheating, we call it **competitive advantage**. So why the double standard with AI writing tools?

When Excel arrived, accountants who used it were called "lazy." Today, NOT using Excel is considered unprofessional. GPS navigation was "cheating" for taxi drivers. Now Uber wouldn't exist without it.

Real Talk: The AI Tools I Use Daily

I'll admit it: I used AI to help structure this very article. Does that make my insights less valuable? I'd argue it makes them more accessible, and I finished in time to actually engage with your comments below.

My daily AI toolkit:

- **ChatGPT** for first drafts and brainstorming
- **Grammarly** for editing and clarity
- **Claude Code** for coding
- **Claude** for complex analysis

- **Perplexity** for information research
- **Local LLMs** for experimentation and privacy

Am I less skilled? Or am I **300% more productive**?

The Ethics Are Simple: Transparency Wins

Yes, there are legitimate concerns about AI-generated content. The solution isn't prohibition, it is **transparency**. Tell people when you've used AI. Give credit where it's due. Use it to enhance, not replace, human judgment.

"Working smarter isn't cheating—it's evolution"

Your Action Plan: Join the Evolution

1. **Experiment fearlessly**: Start with one AI tool this week (or a new one if you already started)
2. **Share openly**: Tell colleagues about your AI wins (and fails)
3. **Lead by example**: Normalise AI use (be careful on data and information shared though)
4. **Stay curious**: The best AI use cases haven't been invented yet

Here's My Challenge to You

Name one successful company that does not use technology to work smarter. I'll wait.

And while you're thinking, **what AI tool are you secretly using that you haven't told your boss about?** Drop it in the comments. Contribute to this conversation.

The Future Is Already Here

By embracing AI as a collaborator rather than a competitor, we harness its power to boost creativity, efficiency, and innovation. The future of work should not be humans versus machines, rather humans with machines achieving more.

Those still calling AI "cheating" will soon join the ranks of fax machine defenders and internet sceptics. The question is not whether to use AI, it is whether you'll lead the charge or get left behind.

Your move: Share this if you're tired of the "AI is cheating" narrative. Comment with the AI tool that's transformed your work. And if you still think AI is cheating, please tell me, do you also refuse to use spell-check?

What's your take? Have you faced resistance to AI tools in your workplace? What's the most ridiculous "that's cheating" accusation you've heard?

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