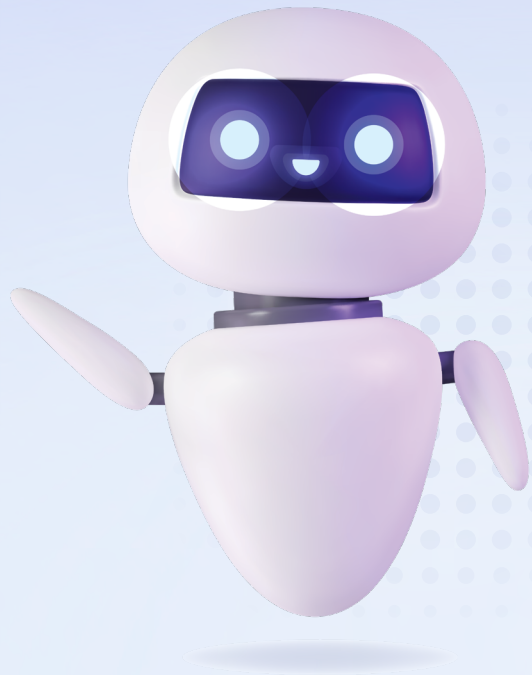# IT AIn't Hard

Chatbots are AI-powered interface tools designed to conduct "intelligent" conversations with users. Most users focus on the entertaining side of chatbots, which may include joke telling, recipe lookups, exercise regimens, and the like. But they can easily be used to enhance productivity. This article will focus on two potential uses of AI chatbots for the finance office.

BY ROB ROQUE

#1 | BEST PRACTICES SCENARIO

As an example, assume you are the finance director responsible for accounting in an organization and your county manager is concerned about the new reporting requirements released by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in GASB Statement No. 96, *Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements*. Although the county manager has read the GASB statement, the council requires a business reason for implementing it. Since the council is not familiar with accounting rules, the county manager wants to reference an organization outside of GASB, such as GFOA, to provide a business case. How can AI-Chat assist? Well, you might think—any AI-Chat tools can scan websites and documents and summarize them.

The Internet offers many AI Tools such as Open-AI, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and IBM Watson. Several of these provide free and subscription-based offerings. The free service is usually a tool trained on earlier or limited data (such as, Internet data through 2021). The subscription-based tools are typically based on larger, more recent, and varied types of data (for example, Wikipedia,

Scholarly Publications, Internet data through 2023). Paid versions of AI tools may also have additional capabilities like being able to summarize websites and images. Finally, users may experience access issues or delays when using free AI tools as opposed to paid ones. Still, it makes sense to experiment with free AI tools first before purchasing a subscription for the most suitable tool.

STEP BY STEP

To address our example scenario, we will ask an AI-Chat tool to search the Internet to prepare up to five business case reasons for implementing GASB 96.

What you'll need

- **An AI tool** with website scanning capabilities.
- **A web browser** (Microsoft Edge is recommended for this example).

How to get started

1. **Sign in to your AI tool**, either free or paid.
2. **Locate the AI chat interface.** This could be a chat symbol or a dedicated website for the tool.
3. **Enter your prompt.** For our example, here's the exact prompt to copy and paste:

   Generate five reasons why my organization should implement GASB 96, based on the website gfoa.org.
4. **Start the search.** Press Enter or the designated icon to initiate the AI search.
5. **Wait for results.** The AI tool will analyze the website and provide five reasons for implementing GASB 96.
6. **Review responses.** Check the answers generated by AI. While AI's strength is reviewing and summarizing large amounts of information quickly, it will make mistakes and results should always be reviewed for context by those ultimately responsible for the analysis.

RESULTS

This AI search yielded a business case based on GFOA, along with other sources. Double-check the detailed facts presented in the answer, but the summary will provide a good outline to help prepare the argument.

#2 | REHEARSAL SCENARIO

In this scenario, you are a budget director who has estimated a two percent shortfall in revenues. You proposed a one percent increase in the sales tax to fill the gap. What kinds of questions are you likely to be asked at the council meeting? Use AI-Chat to propose rehearsal questions.

SET-UP

You want AI-Chat to behave like a council member who is concerned about raising taxes. This is of special importance because elections are later in the year.

PROCEDURE

1. **Open your preferred AI-chat tool** (for example, Google Gemini). Sign in if needed (a free account often suffices).
2. **Enter your prompt:**

   As a council member concerned about raising taxes, I haven't voted for a sales tax increase in five years. Generate five questions for the budget director about the budget shortfall and a potential sales tax increase.
3. **Get answers:** wait for the AI to generate relevant questions.

Sometimes, the chat tool will provide recommendations for further questioning. Try it! And if you want to really be creative, ask AI-Chat to answer its own question. For example, our prompt for this scenario generated five questions. Ask the Chat tool to answer question three, for example, and wait for the results. The information provided by the prompts can be used to help a professional prepare for a public meeting addressing difficult topics.

CONCLUSION

We intentionally left out the answers that AI-Chat provided to entice you to try these tools yourself. Play around with the prompts to see if you can get AI-Chat to yield better results. And as always: double-check the AI results! ▣

Rob Roque was GFOA's technology services manager. Roque died unexpectedly June 13, 2024. See page 9 for more information on Rob's contributions to GFOA, his work to advocate for technology, and his personal style that will be long remembered and deeply missed.