OpenAI

PR 508: Public Relations & Advertising Fundamentals and Strategy, Dainius Krasauskas
Prompt: Strategic Integrated Planning Model, Midterm

Topic: OpenAI's Release Communication Strategy for "DALL-E 2"

DALL-E was communicated but never released to the public. This deconstruction is pre-April 2022, while DALL-E 2, the successor, was ready but yet to be announced publicly. In the following the question will not be *if* OpenAI should publish DALL-E 2, but *how*.

I.   Company or Organization Background

OpenAI is a privately held San Francisco-based company specializing in artificial intelligence research and deployment (Crunchbase, 2022). It was co-founded by *Sam Altman*, *Greg Brockman*, *Ilya Sutskever*, *Wojciech Zaremba*, *John Schulman* and *Elon Musk* in 2015, with the entrepreneurs pledging a total of over one billion US dollars (Shead, 2022). The aim is to develop an Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) from which the whole mankind can benefit (OpenAI, 2022) as some scientists warn AGI could endanger human society or even its existence (Parkin, 2015). In 2018, the Tesla and Space X founder resigned from the board due to the potential for future conflicts of interest with his other ventures (Kolodny, 2018). However, Musk remains a donor.

Initially founded as a non-profit organization, OpenAI transitioned into a *capped for-profit* structure in 2019 to increase investment chances to be able to secure AI talent and infrastructure, due to heavy competition by companies with enormous resources like *Google* and *Meta* (Coldewey, 2019). A return on investment of up to 100 times is since possible while everything in excess of that will go to its non-profit work. While some critics understood the new strategy, many voiced concerns, questioning OpenAI's inaugural mission to "advance digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole, unconstrained by a need to generate financial return." (OpenAI, 2015) In the same year, Microsoft invested one billion US dollars while also becoming OpenAI's exclusive cloud provider. Since, OpenAI has stated its "intend to license some … pre-AGI technologies, with Microsoft becoming [the] preferred partner for commercializing." (OpenAI, 2022)

OpenAI is mostly known for research and applications mostly around *reinforcement learning* (Lee, 2019) as well as its commitment to ethics, outlined in its famous charter (Hao, 2020). The company regularly releases open-source tools and informs publicly on research findings, with those often being published in leading machine learning conferences and on OpenAI's blog (Golden, 2022).

Among the best-known products besides *OpenAI Gym* and *OpenAI Five* are especially the text generators *GPT-2* and *GPT-3*, as well as the image generator *DALL-E* which was never made public (Wikipedia contributors, 2021).

OpenAI has a history of holding technology back in fear of misuse such as fake news generation, with prominent examples being GPT-2 (Hern, 2019) and GPT-3 (Eadicicco, 2020) which both were released only after substantial delay.

II.   **Mission Statement**

OpenAI's goal is to disrupt the tech market dominated by the "Big Five" (Amazon, Apple, Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta) via breakthrough Artificial General Intelligence research and ethical applications for the mainstream public.

III.   **Brand Positioning**

For people curious about human advancement, OpenAI is the most trustworthy and innovative place for AI applications among AI research institutions, because no other competitor has a more sophisticated track record of publishing freely testable AI applications to the mainstream public.

IV.   **Statement of Problem / Opportunity**

The need for a campaign is mainly an answer to two major problem areas; one specific to OpenAI and one general concerning the whole AI industry.

OpenAI's general reputation was very high at the time of its founding (Metz, 2016). While the overwhelming majority of the AI industry like *Google* and *Meta* are for-profits, OpenAI was explicitly founded with the goal of being independent of money (Piper, 2019). However, since its transformation to a *capped for-profit* organization, opinions about the company have widely diverged. OpenAI argues that the company is now much more likely to attract investors and, in theory, without financial problems can be more competitive against the big players and drive AI research and ethical applications forward. Some critics agree with the argumentation (Coldewey, 2019; Metz, 2019; Piper, 2019) with the main reason being the extremely high cash burn rate in AI research (Patrawala, 2019). On this, CEO *Sam Altman* says that, "OpenAI needs to make money in order to do research—not the other way around." (Hao, 2020) The new capped for-profit *OpenAI LC* remains under the control of *OpenAI Inc.*, the still-existing non-profit umbrella structure, and additionally, the company has organized a new board layout to ensure that only "members without [financial stakes] can vote on decisions where the interests of limited partners and OpenAI Nonprofit's mission may conflict—including any decisions about making payouts to investors and employees." (Brockman et. al, 2019) Still, many journalists criticize the transformation (Cohan 2019; Hao, 2020; Haskins, 2019), going as far as calling OpenAI out for "[selling] its soul." (Romero, 2021a)

Another problem on OpenAI's reputational side were the overexaggerated research announcements, especially around GPT-2 (Hao, 2020). OpenAI claimed the text generator was too dangerous to share due to the high risk of misuse, but the subsequent release immediately relativized the potential danger. Because of such instances, critics repeatedly accused OpenAI of artificially hyping and deliberately overestimating the state of progress of its AI. The initial mentality of full openness and heavy open sourcing has since shifted (official reason) due to the fear of harmful use of knowledge and/or applications. "[T]he leadership has moved away from its original belief that openness is the best way to build beneficial AGI." (Hao, 2020) In a more recent example results of a research paper that sparked great interest were "quietly" (Hao, 2020) published, without any announcement beforehand, which for many followers sparked confusion.

Still, OpenAI generally enjoys a high reputation, especially with regard to its AI research, and criticism of the new funding model seems to have flattened. According to AI researchers, OpenAI, with comparably little funding, is among the world's most advanced organizations in their research field (Shead, 2021a), and applications such as GPT-3 regularly perform very strongly (Vogel, 2022).

Furthermore, research results around DALL-E were received as exceptional, even if the application itself was never released (Shead, 2021b). It can therefore be assumed that the next generation, DALL-E 2, which is still unknown to the public, could represent a great opportunity for OpenAI.

Probably the biggest problems for OpenAI however are the risks associated with Artificial Intelligence and especially Artificial General Intelligence in science and the general public. 37% of Americans are more concerned than excited about the increase of AI in daily life, in comparison to 18% being more excited than concerned, with the loss of human jobs being the biggest factor (Anderson et. al., 2022). Moreover, there even exists a fundamental fear that AGI could, in the worst case, lead to a global catastrophe such as the control or extinction of humanity (Lewis, 2015). While there is far from a consensus in the scientific community on the likelihood of such a scenario, the media world nevertheless pays sufficient attention to this outcome due to statements made by public intellectuals such as *Stephen Hawking*, *Bill Gates* and *Elon Musk* (Parkin, 2015). Biases in data fed to the learning systems also play a major role, as there have been several instances of, albeit often unintentional, discrimination and racism in AI deployment (Samuel, 2022).

Altogether, the Pew Research Center summarizes that, "[p]ublic views are tied to how these technologies would be used, what constraints would be in place." (Anderson et. al., 2022)

V. **Research**

The research should shed light on how the brand is perceived, where it's positioned, what the target audiences for image generators are, which prior release communications were positive, which negative, and how fears about AI are caused and can be reduced.

1) Primary Research

   A) Qualitative Research **(all qualitative surveys with open questions)**

      a) *Respondents more excited than concerned about the increase of AI in daily life*

How is the brand perceived by people who have already used OpenAI applications?

How is the brand perceived by people who have never used OpenAI applications but have heard of the company?

Which OpenAI release communications (applications and research) were perceived as positive, which as negative and why?

Where do people get tech news from and why?

How do people use social media for AI-related content?

Which area of AI use cases would people like to try out if it was possible?

How do people use GPT-2 and other OpenAI applications?

What would people like to use AI-powered image generators for, both privately and professionally?

b) Respondents more concerned than excited about the increase of AI in daily life

Where are areas people would most likely get exposed to AI-related content?

Which area of AI are people the most open to and why?

Which areas of AI do people fear the most and which the least?

What AI use cases would reduce people's skepticism of AI?

What differentiates common AI like today's Siri from, in their eyes, more fearful prospects of AI?

What would people like to use AI-powered image generators for, both privately and professionally?

What are people's biggest concerns regarding AI-powered image generators?

B) Quantitative Research

Which OpenAI blog articles are the most popular? (website data)

Which news outlets do tech-curious people follow? (survey)

Which social media channels do tech-curious people follow? (survey)

Have people heard of OpenAI's DALL-E*? (survey)

*for clarification: the first version of DALL-E was openly communicated in January 2021, but never published

2) Secondary Research

Which are the jobs most likely and least likely to be replaced by AI?

Are people rather excited or concerned about AI?

What are the biggest concerns about AI?

What decreases fear of AI?

What are the biggest competitors to OpenAI?

What are the biggest competitors to DALL-E?

What are the target groups for image generators?

VI.   SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strong reputation for sophisticated AI research and applications (Shead, 2021a)
- Strong followership in comparison to many competitors
- Strong ethical charter and mission (OpenAI, 2022)
- GPT-3 has very strong reputation (Romero, 2021b)
- Great interest in DALL-E despite not being released (Shead, 2021b)

Weaknesses

- Overexaggerated research announcements and artificial hype in the past weakened brand perception (Hao, 2020)
- Move away from non-profit-only was mainly perceived negatively (Cohan 2019; Hao, 2020; Haskins, 2019; Romero, 2021a)
- Strong affiliation with Microsoft, despite its general independence (Hao, 2020)

Opportunities

- "More Americans support than oppose developing AI" (Dafoe & Zhang, 2019)
- "Trust in A.I. is correlated with perceived understanding" (Ipsos, 2022)
- No known competition on the same technological level as the so far uncommunicated DALL-E 2
- Tech influencers can elevate product reputation (Privateer, n.d.)

Threats

- Strong competitors with significantly bigger budgets (Piper, 2019)
- Majority of public and parts of science more concerned than excited about AI (Anderson et. al., 2022; Lewis, 2015)
- AI could be misused by humans

VII.   Strategic Insights

OpenAI is one of the most prestigious companies in AI research and deployment despite its substantially lower budget compared to rivals such as *Google* and *Meta*. OpenAI enjoys a large following and in particular, GPT-3 and the unpublished DALL-E (version 1) made global headlines and are among the most advanced and tangible AI technologies for the mainstream public.

At the same time, however, OpenAI has made many decisions in the past that have led to considerable criticism and a deteriorating reputation. Technologies such as GPT-2 were artificially hyped and the transformation from a non-profit to a capped for-profit company is seen by many as damaging to its initial strong core values.

OpenAI is placing a substantial bet on being instrumental in shaping the breakthrough to Artificial General Intelligence, but the competition is intense and wealthy. Additionally, many researchers and especially the general public are afraid of the misuse of AI and the loss of jobs in particular.

However, the negative sentiments are also related to the perceived understanding of AI, and in general, citizens of many countries, such as the U.S., are more likely to support AI development despite its risks, rather than discourage research. Using influential publications and tech influencers could further these tendencies and be used for both educating the broad public on its technology, as well as enhancing its brand image.

OpenAI should therefore use its yet unannounced but highly sophisticated DALL-E 2 to improve its weakened reputation, educate a broad public to decrease general concerns about AI, and most importantly find a good middle ground between the two extreme communication methods used in the past of either overhyping releases or publishing those quietly to prevent further reputation losses. It is also vital to strongly communicate its safety mechanisms against misuse and biases to restore trust in the brand of creating AI that serves the most people possible.

VIII.   Communications Goal(s)

1) Increase brand perception of OpenAI

- OpenAI has suffered many setbacks in recent years surrounding its reputation
- A communication strategy should increase trust levels

2) Increase perceived understanding of AI

- Educating as many people as possible would be aligned with OpenAI's ethical charter
- Increased perceived understanding of AI would also decrease concerns

### IX.	Communications Objectives

1) Increase brand association with
   a) *"goodwill" by 8%;*
   b) *"trust" by 10%, and;*
   c) *"leading in AI development" by 12%*
   within 9 months

- The campaign should restore OpenAI's damaged reputation
- Due to safety concerns, OpenAI has shifted the tactic away from being known as *transparent/open*, therefore having *trust* is a more important and up-to-date metric
- Goodwill and trust are similar, but have crucial differences: e.g., you can be seen as good-willed but due to incompetence also untrustworthy in creating an ethical AGI

2) Increase percentage of people more excited than concerned about the increase of AI in daily life by 5% after communication

- 37% of Americans are more concerned than excited about the increase of AI in daily life (Anderson et. al., 2022)

- Less concerns would mean more perceived understanding of AI, aligned with OpenAI's goal to educate the broad public

3) Increase in OpenAI website visitors previously not interested in AI by 20% compared to previous year, adjusted to general visitor growth

- This pays into OpenAI's overarching goal to educate and bring beneficial AI from which the whole of mankind can benefit, instead of just tech-interested people

X.   Target Audiences

There are three very different target audiences to be reached for a successful communications campaign. What combines all target groups is the potential interest in image generation, while the reasons for the interest vary.

1) Tech-curious people skeptical about OpenAI
   - Audience should know OpenAI and have a negative opinion of the company
   - Probability of trying new OpenAI applications or visiting website high after seeing news about the company
   - Very few people are skeptical about OpenAI's research, but more of its trustworthiness and previous flashy communication methods
   - A successful communication campaign could decrease skepticism about OpenAI

2) People more excited than concerned about the increase of AI in daily life
   - These are the ones with the highest probability of increasing OpenAI's perception as being the leading AI research institution
   - Important target audience for future followership

3) People more concerned than excited about the increase of AI in daily life
   - Most important audience to broadly increase OpenAI's goodwill perception

- Most important to OpenAI's charter, as these are the ones who do not see the potential of AI to benefit mankind
- Likelihood of this target audience being skeptical of competitors is high: Opportunistic chance to position OpenAI as one of the few trustworthy AI researcher institutions

XI. Current Audience Brand Perception

As defined in the SWOT Analysis, OpenAI's perception is very polarized. Only few people doubt the company's capabilities in AI research, but many have negative sentiments about the company due to previous over-exaggerations and its move away from being purely non-profit. Nevertheless, the total number of followers is strong for a company with relatively limited resources and the initial charter stating OpenAI's ethical mission remains unchanged and is still prominently found on the website.

XII. Desired Audience Brand Perception

OpenAI should be seen as the AI research equivalent of *David* against a world of untrustful *Tech-Goliaths* (Amazon, Apple, Alphabet, Microsoft, Meta): A relatively small company driving the most sophisticated AI research and applications forward in the most open and ethical way possible.

XIII. Key Message Mapping

1) Single-minded message:
   "With our leading AI research, we do all we can to benefit all of humanity"

   o OpenAI's goals should be to increase its perception of being the industry leader while also improving the weakened trust

2) Audience-specific messages:

"OpenAI is the most trustworthy and compelling showcase of positive impact by AI"

   a) Tech-curious people skeptical about OpenAI

      "OpenAI is getting back on its initial mission of being open and beneficial to as many people as possible"

      o Especially people with interest in tech have been the ones criticizing OpenAI

   b) People more excited than concerned about the increase of AI in daily life

      " OpenAI is the leading AI research institution with the most exciting applications and the highest ethical standard"

      o This audience is the one to reach to increase OpenAI's perception of being the most trustful and sophisticated AI researchers

   c) People more concerned than excited about the increase of AI in daily life

      "OpenAI is a company that is concerned about AI and takes its mission seriously"

      o This is closely tied to OpenAI's mission to openly educate

XIV.   **Strategies**

Disclaimer: All the following strategies of course do not have anything to do with the AI itself as it is fully in the hands of researchers and developers, certainly not communicators, to change the application.

1) Release the image generator DALL-E 2 in a controlled and responsive way
   - OpenAI was regularly criticized for releasing research and applications either by holding them back due to overexaggerated safety concerns or did not have communication around it at all

- The first generation of DALL-E has received great praise and was communicated well, but was never released for the public to try the technology
- DALL-E 2 should break with the previous unpopular release tactics with a more strategic approach
- Increase OpenAI's position as leading AI research institute

2) Showcase the range of positive use cases of AI
- Increase the excitement of AI by showing its capabilities
- Increase perceived understanding of AI and therefore decrease concerns
- Increase OpenAI's position as leading AI research institute

3) Showcase openly what OpenAI's Artificial Intelligence currently cannot do
- Increase trust in the brand by showing its technological limitations/flaws
- Increase perceived understanding of AI and therefore decrease concerns
- Improve OpenAI's brand perception as being trustworthy

4) Educate on how AI works
- Increase perceived understanding of AI and therefore decrease concerns
- Improve OpenAI's brand perception as being good-willed

5) Showcase the actions taken to mitigate misuse
- Improve OpenAI's brand perception as being good-willed
- Improve OpenAI's brand perception of being trustworthy by showing potential dangers of AI

XV.   **Tactics**

1) Paid
   a) none
      o too dangerous to promote such polarizing technology with money

o   could additionally backfire with the transformation away from purely non-profit

2) Earned

   a) News release for biggest tech news sites

      o   here is where most OpenAI critics are

      o   drives more people to the website

      o   increases positive brand perceptions

   b) News release for biggest national and international newspapers

      o   drives more people to OpenAI website

      o   increases positive brand perception

   c) Pitch + early access for individual journalists, creative influencers and tech influencers

      o   enhances chances of news articles or social media posts with exclusivity

      o   increases positive brand perception, as it is first released to a safe group of people before going out to the broad public

      o   with creative influencers: positive coverage would reduce the big fear of "AI image generator replaces creative jobs" and frames the story to "AI helps creatives be more creative"

3) Shared

   a) Repost images generated by influencers on Instagram

      o   reduces the big fear of "AI image generator replaces creative jobs" and frames the story to "AI helps creatives be more creative"

   b) Post blog articles on social media

      o   Spread awareness to the more technical, in-depth blog articles

4) Owned

   a) Social media videos explaining DALL-E 2

      o   videos should be adapted to the specifics of the respective social media platform

      o   show how the technology works

      o   show how the technology can positively impact people's lives

      o   show what the technology cannot do

      o   show importance to mitigate misuse

      o   stress OpenAI's mission to develop AI for the benefit of humanity

   b) Blog articles

- o articles should transparently describe the release process and the development behind the application
- o most in-depth and technical content piece apart from research paper (not part of communication strategy as the paper is and should be purely scientific)
- o honesty is vital

c) Create subpage of OpenAI website for DALL-E
- o see all points from a) besides first
- o should go more in-depth than videos
- o should be interactive, in comparison to blog articles

d) Create dedicated Instagram channel
- o as DALL-E does not create videos but images, it is vital to launch a channel on the world's most popular visual social media platform for images
- o important to separate the channel from OpenAI content, as the target audience is different

XVI. <u>KPIs – Measurement & Evaluation</u>

1) Increase brand association with
   - d) *"goodwill" by 8%;*
   - e) *"trust" by 10%, and;*
   - f) *"leading in AI development" by 12%*

   within 9 months
   - Quantitative survey of brand perception, pre- vs. post-campaign

2) Increase percentage of people more excited than concerned about the increase of AI in daily life by 5% after communication
   - Quantitative survey of randomized representative group, pre- vs. post-campaign
   - e.g., 18% of Americans are more excited than concerned (Anderson et. al., 2022): a survey should lead to similar results and should show an increase to 23% post-campaign

3) Increase in OpenAI website visitors previously not interested in AI by 20% compared to previous year, adjusted to its general visitor growth
   - Analysis of website data pre- vs. post-campaign

XVII. Timeline
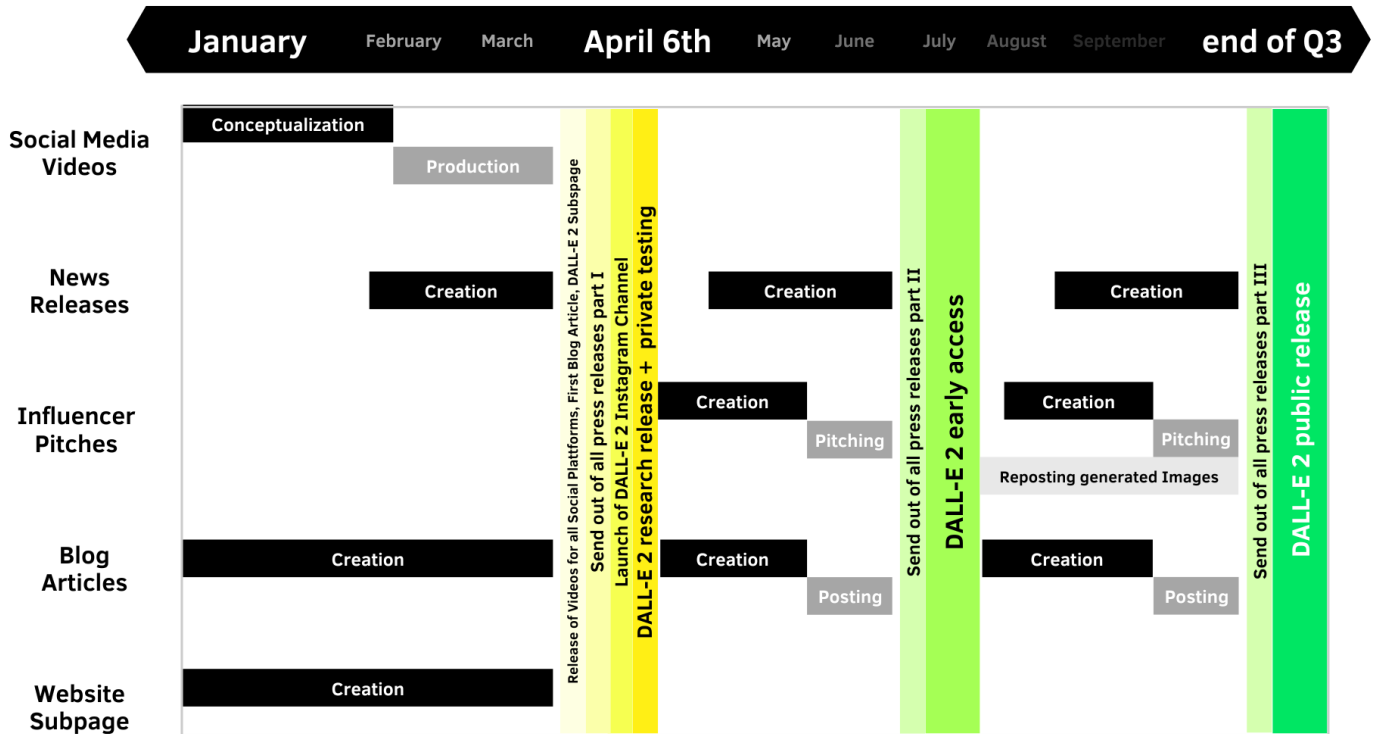
XVIII. Budget

Social media videos	Production	**15.000$**
News releases and pitches	PR Retainer	**50.000$** per month
DALL-E Social Media Management	New Full-time Social Media Manager dedicated to DALL-E 2	**8.000$** per month
Total costs for one month		**60.500$**
Total costs for six months		**363.000$**

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