

Flying Solo podcast – Donna McGeorge

How AI can revolutionise your business and life

*Automated transcript

Cec Busby [00:00:02]:

Hi everybody, I'm Cec Busby, editor of Flying Solo. Welcome to our weekly podcast where we step inside the minds and lives of soloists and small business owners.

Today we're diving headfirst into the world of artificial intelligence and how it can revolutionise your life. Joining me today on the show is acclaimed productivity expert Donna McGeorge, who also happens to be the author of a new book, *ChatGPT Revolution: How to Simplify Your Life Admin with AI*. So whether you're a small business owner seeking efficiencies or a solopreneur yearning for a moment of zen, Donna's got your back. She'll be sharing practical tips, fun ideas and invaluable insights on how ChatGPT can save you time, help you stress less and put an end to repetitive tasks, and also inject some creative spark back into your business and life.

Donna, thank you so much for joining me today. Welcome to the show.

Donna McGeorge [00:01:04]:

Absolutely my pleasure.

Cec Busby [00:01:07]:

Excellent. It's always lovely to have you. Now, what I'm very excited about talking to you about today is your new book, *ChatGPT Revolution: How to Simplify Your Life Admin with AI*. Now, what inspired you to put pen to paper on this topic?

Donna McGeorge [00:01:27]:

I think part of it was as a productivity person, I started to get questions coming to me about, are you using it? Have you tried it? And so I was a reasonably early adopter, and by that I mean it was just January this year. And so as I started using it, I started to immediately see the benefits from a productivity perspective. And so that got me researching a little bit more, having conversations. My sister, who she was also an early adopter, we started just with each other raving about it, and I thought, yeah, I think there's a book in this. And I think the book needs to get out quickly to help people get started with it, because I don't think it's going away. I think this is as big as, say, the internet was when it came and soon everyone will be using it as a matter of course, but it's important at some point to make a start. And so I thought, I'm going to help people make a start.

Cec Busby [00:02:27]:

So what do you say to those people that are a bit nervous about taking the leap into starting a ChatGPT account and dabbling a little?

Donna McGeorge [00:02:38]:

Well, it depends on what they're worried about, but I don't know that there's anything specific to worry about. But I have to tell you just a quick story because I'm old enough - this just shows my age - I'm old enough to remember when one of my bosses said to me, the internet will never be allowed on anyone's desktop because we can't trust it. And so here we are, you and I doing this call right now is thanks to the internet, in effect. And so I think AI is a bit the same. We're a bit nervous about it. We don't know much about it. But depending on what it is you're scared of, if you're worried about security, then don't give any information that is personal. If you're worried about breaking it, you can't. If you're worried that it might be difficult, it's probably the easiest app I've ever used in my life. And if you're worried that somehow the robots are going to take over the world, I would say you've probably seen too many science fiction films.

Cec Busby [00:03:30]:

You've watched one too many Terminator movies?

Donna McGeorge [00:03:33]:

Absolutely.

Cec Busby [00:03:37]:

Have you seen that meme with the young John Connor going, the people are using ChatGPT, won't they learn?

Donna McGeorge [00:03:46]:

I know, I actually saw that yesterday and I thought, that's hilarious. Have we learned nothing from watching Terminator films? Apparently not.

Cec Busby [00:03:53]:

So, small business owners and sole traders are often notoriously time poor. And from what you're saying, I think ChatGPT and basically anything that's AI-powered can help with that overwhelm when it comes to administrative tasks. So what are some things that people should be looking at using the power of ChatGPT for?

Donna McGeorge [00:04:18]:

So you're absolutely right. I think one of the things that happens in small businesses is we get a bit bogged down in the mundane and the adminivia of our world. And so, straight up, I would say anytime you feel stuck, maybe it's an email you have to write to someone,

maybe a customer has made an unusual request and you're a bit stuck on how to start. Go to ChatGPT and ask it. And you don't even have to have great grammar, you can simply just say, a client has made this unusual request, how could I respond to it? And it will give you a response. Now, you don't have to immediately copy and paste it, you can massage it, but that's kind of my initial advice is anytime you're stuck, go and have a look at it.

But it's more than that. So I often think of what are the time-consuming tasks that you don't do that often, but they just consume a lot of time. So things like writing job descriptions, updating procedures manuals, anything that's kind of process driven. I saw one person copied and pasted their old admin manual into it and said, please just update this with the technologies that have changed over the last five years. And it pretty much updated it in virtually a straight-up usable form. So I kind of think of anything you think you'd love to delegate. At the moment with ChatGPT, a lot of it's written form of communication, but if you go and explore other AI apps, I know I'm just playing around at the moment with an app that will edit video. So if you've taken a whole bunch of video, you can get it to chop up the video for you, however you give the instructions. Now, don't ask me much more than that because that's what I'm playing with. But there is so many different applications. If we're starting with ChatGPT, just think about what do you get stuck with? What consumes your time? What are the rare but mundane tasks that aren't worth delegating because they don't have enough, and maybe even summarising? So one of my favourite things is I get a lot of stuff that I need to read and sometimes I'll say, throw it all into ChatGPT and say, can you please summarize this with the top five points? Look, I'm so excited. I could give you so many things. Meeting notes is gorgeous. Like, record your meetings, get them transcribed, stick it into ChatGPT and say, now, can you pull out the salient points and the actions that we discussed? So it's endless, the possibilities.

Cec Busby [00:06:48]:

And how important is that prompt, though? Because is it a case of what comes out as is only as good as what you put in?

Donna McGeorge [00:06:58]:

Absolutely. It's the rubbish in, rubbish out model, but you learn how to do prompts. I think that the best thing to think about it is you're chatting with someone. So I've seen people make mistakes where they say, can you please give me the best advice for handling a poor performer at work? And it gives a response and you think, oh, well, that's no good because you're kind of thinking about it like you would Google. So you've got to kind of shift your thinking a little bit like this. It's more that you're having a conversation with an advisor. And so I might say, here's the context that I'm working in. I'm working in a building and construction company. I've got someone who's worked with me for two years. They've made three very fundamental errors in their work that are like rookie errors. Can you please give me four or five ways in which I can approach this in a conversation? And so the more context you give it, the more information you give it, the better quality the work you're going to get. But here's the interesting thing, Cec. If you say to it, if it gives you a response and you don't like it, or it's not relevant or adequate, you can tell it that. You literally type in in the chat

that was not adequate, or that feels mundane, or I'd like something a little bit more beefed up. Can you have another go? And it will, and it'll apologise, oh, I'm sorry, here's another.

Cec Busby [00:08:23]:

Although it has told me I'm dead.

Donna McGeorge [00:08:26]:

Oh, it did not, did it?

Cec Busby [00:08:28]:

Yes, it did. And it gave me very specific dates and it kind of pulled things out from my career, like was an actor and a journalist and blah, blah, blah, and known for this and that, and lots of things were true and lots of it were things that I actually hadn't done. And then it gave a very specific death date for me. <laughs>

Donna McGeorge [00:08:54]:

Now, I do have a kind of an explanation for that. The technical terminology is hallucination. And so what it's done is it's drawing information about you, about what's available online, you and every other Cec Busby or Seth or someone with - there's not that many, right? But there might be a few people that are Cec something else and Busby and something else. Right. So it goes out and just trawls information. I always think of it what it's been trained on is like confetti, like you've gone through what are they called? Shredder. And so all the information on the internet or available in the world has been gone through a shredder. And ChatGPT pulls bits and pieces together and it kind of goes with logic and predictability and probability. So it gets it wrong a lot. Like a lot, because it just pulls random information together. So you're absolutely right and I can tell perfectly well that you're alive and well. So it really got that one wrong, didn't it? Yes.

Cec Busby [00:10:02]:

Yes, I didn't die on when was it? "Sadly, Cec Busby passed away on July 3, 2018. She was remembered by many as a gifted and much-loved active voiceover, artist and journalist". All of which are, like, true. I was an actor for many, many years. I do do voiceovers still to this day, and I am a journalist. And it literally gave my correct date of birth, said I was known for this and that, it pulled out jobs that I'd done, like working for ABC and pulled out TV shows I'd worked on. But it literally killed me, which is by the by. But I think I think the point is maybe also it's always good to fact-check what ChatGPT has given you.

Donna McGeorge [00:10:52]:

Well, 100%. And so as someone who's written a book on this, I asked it to help me with several things and it just told me outright lies about a number of things. So that's true. But what I'm really curious about is who actually did die on that day? And how was your name

somehow attached to that? Because it could be maybe you attended an event of someone who passed away. Maybe you went to the funeral and it was talked about in the media and that's how your name got attached to that date. Maybe I don't know. I'm making it up, right?

Cec Busby [00:11:20]:

But maybe I wrote an obituary for someone that died on that day. I don't know. Who knows? Anyway, that's completely off-topic. So for more of a value perspective for entrepreneurs and business owners, how can they strike a balance between, you know, doing stuff themselves and what they should be putting on to AI in terms of admin and what they should be still keeping because it requires more of that human touch.

Donna McGeorge [00:11:55]:

Well, if I just go from a security perspective to start off with, first of all, you shouldn't be putting anything on there that you wouldn't be happy to put on the front page of the national newspapers because there's still a chance it could end up in the hands of the wrong people or somehow published. So, first of all, we wouldn't be copying and pasting large chunks of proprietary data on these. That's the first thing I'd say.

The second thing I'd say is the research out of MIT in the US says that anytime you have AI plus a human, you get a better result. So AI on its own is okay, humans on their own are pretty good, but when you bring them both together, that's when you get a great result. So I use it all the time to help me, as you know, to write a book, to help me write articles, et cetera. But there is no way I would verbatim copy and paste anything that ChatGPT has generated, straight up. It always requires human intervention. The content it produces, no matter how much you prompt it to try and sound like a human and add humour and emotion, it still comes off sounding like a machine. And so there's always the need to do that. And of course, there's no substitute for human connection. So when there's a need for human connection, you absolutely should be writing or producing that work yourself.

Cec Busby [00:13:19]:

So what are some tasks that you think should definitely be shifted towards AI that it makes sense to automate?

Donna McGeorge [00:13:28]:

Yeah, so this is kind of beyond ChatGPT. So there are organisations now who are able to come and train AI on your most basic data or basic administrative tasks. So, for example, when you onboard a new employee, there's a whole bunch of data entry that has to be done around that. And so you can now get what they call a virtual teammate, and the virtual teammate will look at what you've done and then create the algorithms around that. And in fact, they do it faster and more accurately than a human can. And so anything that's repetitive is an opportunity to be given to AI. And what you're doing then, it's not like you're taking a job away from someone, but what you're doing is freeing up a really smart human being to do more value-added work. So the first thing I'd be looking for is, what are the time

consuming, repetitive tasks that we have to do? So data entry, updating documents, all that sort of stuff. Specifically with ChatGPT, for me, it's really around any written communication that just is time-consuming. Or if 80% of it is pretty much the same, help it write you the 20% that is customised to something. Or get it to write for 80% that is standard, and then you add the human 20%. So it's kind of anytime you have to produce written work, which is kind of say a lot of the time, look at all the emails you have to do. And I know that Microsoft is at the moment in the process of integrating AI and generative AI into its applications. So there will come a time soon where you'll be able to hit a button that says, here's the email I've received, hit a button that says, draft me a response. And so it'll be nearly instantaneous. So that's not that far away.

Cec Busby [00:15:23]:

Amazing, isn't it, how quickly the whole technology is evolving?

Donna McGeorge [00:15:28]:

Yeah, which is why, for any of your listeners, if you're a little bit still on the fence about it, I'd say ChatGPT is a really easy way to dip your toe in the water and just begin a conversation with it. Be curious and ask it for a conversation. Do it with some personal life stuff if you're a bit worried about business. So go and ask it for meal plans, holiday suggestions, family entertainment stuff. And if you give it enough parameters in the prompt, it can give you some really good results. So play around with it that way first to dip your toe in before you start thinking about business. But my neighbour across the road, who knows I've just written this book, I was out of my verandah and he yelled at me and said, oh my God, I've just tried ChatGPT. You know, a person had said to me, could I write a review for them about some work they'd done? And I'd been putting it off for weeks because I just didn't know how to start it. So I literally asked ChatGPT to write a review, gave it a few parameters, and it said it wrote me the best review. So, I think the possibilities are endless.

Cec Busby [00:16:34]:

I would agree, but still, that human element is necessary.

Donna McGeorge [00:16:37]:

Well, yes, the human element, and I like to think of it, in terms of how I work with it, as an eager intern that occasionally has a hangover. So it's very eager to please and it'll answer any question you ask it, and it will be absolutely convincing of the truth. For example, "Cec Busby passed away in 2018" and it declares that absolutely truthful. But you've got to kind of A, check its answers sometimes and B, smooth out the rough edges with the human element.

Cec Busby [00:17:12]:

So what do you say to those people that are concerned about job displacement; that AI is going to take over soon, all the jobs will be the robots?

Donna McGeorge [00:17:25]:

Well, I would say in my lifetime, I know of a number of jobs that technology has taken away. And of course, there's new jobs that always come on the back end of it. So just in my lifetime, I can remember going into Myer or David Jones in a major city in Australia, and there'd be someone driving the lift, right? So that doesn't exist anymore. I still remember switchboard operators, they don't exist anymore. So there's always technologies that displace jobs. So for anyone that's worried about whether your job is going to be taken, I'd be saying, don't worry about your job being taken by AI. It's more likely that your job will be taken by someone who embraces AI. So I would say, yes, of course there's going to be jobs that get displaced, but some research out of the UK suggested that it's going to create more jobs than it displaces.

Cec Busby [00:18:21]:

So, in your experience, what are some of the common mistakes that people might make when they're starting to incorporate chatbots into their workflow.

Donna McGeorge [00:18:32]:

Specifically around chat GPT? I think they forget that it's, or they treat it like Google. So they go in, they ask it a Google type question, they get a somewhat inadequate response and then they give up. So I would say people give up too soon when it comes to chatbots. If I'm introducing a chatbot into my business. And what I mean by that is so a customer comes to my website and a chatbot pops up and I can now engage in a conversation with it. The biggest mistake I see is they're not trained well enough, they haven't been trained on enough data, and customers become frustrated with that, and they don't get access to a real human quick enough. So I think chatbots on websites are great, but the moment it gets a little bit complicated, you got to get a human involved as quickly as possible. And the other thing I'd say is people don't know how to craft their prompts well enough, or they give up too early, or they don't engage in conversation, they don't train the conversation or the app, say ChatGPT, better. They don't give it enough feedback - that wasn't good enough; do this for me; or yes, I liked that part, change this part for me. You can continue having a conversation with it.

Cec Busby [00:19:42]:

So what would you think - is there any sort of step by step - I can't speak today. <laugh> Is there any kind of step by step that you might give someone who's struggling with those prompts, for how to make queries that will produce better results?

Donna McGeorge [00:19:59]:

Yes. So one of the things I remind people of is that ChatGPT is a doer, not a thinker. So if I'm not an expert in the thing I'm asking it for, then I'm not going to be sure how to write the prompt. So stay in your swim lane, basically, would be the first bit of advice. So if you're asking it for things that you have some knowledge about, you're going to get better results.

So I talk about the three P's of prompts, which the first one is, and I'm just looking it up in my book. One moment, please. There we go. It's perspective. I just want to get them in order. It's perspective. So what perspective are you wanting it to come from? So I'll say to it, I'm writing an email from the perspective of a manager to an employee. So what perspective am I coming from then? Then we might say purpose. So I'm writing an email from the perspective of a manager to an employee to provide them with some feedback. Great. So now we've got the purpose. And then personality. And I want it to be casual, in style, with a positive and motivating message. So the more context you give it, the more information you give it, you'll get a better result. So just to go over that again. So first of all, my advice is have a go is the first bit. Step one, have a go. Secondly, think about perspective. What perspective are you wanting it to come from? What's the purpose that you want it to do? And is there an aspect of personality that you want it to have? Because you can tell it to be any personality. You can say, write the email from the perspective of Elon Musk and it will probably give you some pretty brutal feedback, but there it is.

Cec Busby [00:21:35]:

And as you said, your neighbour with the review, or you mentioned you could ask it what's for dinner? I mean, that's the eternal question, isn't it? Should we be using it for those kind of things as well?

Donna McGeorge [00:21:50]:

Yes. So anyone that's come home from a busy day at work is suffering from decision fatigue and someone says, what's for dinner? And you just feel like biting their heads off because you're just so tired. Well, ChatGPT does extraordinary meal planning. So if you were to say to it, we're a family of five, here are the age groups. One kid doesn't like peas, the other doesn't like, I don't know, asparagus. And one is a Celiac, can you please give us a meal plan for the next?

Cec Busby [00:22:22]:

And what about, oh, this is what's in the fridge.

Donna McGeorge [00:22:25]:

Absolutely. So either you can say, give me a meal plan for this, or I've got potatoes, chops and mustard in the cupboard, give me some meal options, and then even add to it and say, give me ten meal options. That's the Google mindset, you give me options. It's one, ask it for ten. And the second thing is you can then say to it and they have to be able to be prepared within ten minutes. So the more parameters you put in there, the tighter you're going to get. So, yeah, it's really cool. It's almost like a thermomix for ideas, if you will.

Cec Busby [00:23:03]:

I like it. It's a great booster for creativity as well. I think if you're feeling a bit roadblocked around something, you can get your creative juices flowing again by putting some queries into ChatGPT.

Donna McGeorge [00:23:17]:

Yeah, I use it mostly for that. So I'm feeling stuck, I'm needing ideas and I'll say, hey, I'm stuck on this. I could use some inspiration or ideas about this. What have other people said about this? When I think about - I used to get my inspiration from Google, for example, I'd say, who else is writing about this topic or doing things about this topic? And then of course, I'd have to trawl all the responses that I'd get. But when I ask ChatGPT those same kind of questions, it kind of puts it in more of a narrative and starts a conversation. So then I can say, oh, that's interesting. Tell me more about that one and where did you get this from? And then I have to check its references to make sure that they're correct. But I find it extraordinary as a thought partner.

Cec Busby [00:24:02]:

And what about the currency of ChatGPT? Because by currency I mean the timeliness, not money. Just because didn't the data that's included in there at the moment, it stops at a certain time?

Donna McGeorge [00:24:20]:

Yes, it stops in 2022?

Cec Busby:

Yeah, maybe even 2021.

Donna McGeorge:

Yeah, I think it was either December 2021 or anyway, yes. So the point at which it was what they call scraped was a particular point in time. And so if you ask it for something and it can't - if you say, what's the weather like in Melbourne today? It will say, no, I can't, because my data is only as old as whatever it is, September, December 2021. However, that's based on GPT-3, which is the engine that sits behind the free version of ChatGPT. The new engine, GPT-4, which you get as part of the paid - I think it's \$20 a month as part of the paid version - you now have access to more recent data and a lot more data, and it has access to the internet, so the chances are I could say, what's the weather like in Melbourne today? And it'll be able to tell me. Now, I haven't actually tested that, but I'm going to immediately after I get off this call.

Cec Busby [00:25:21]:

Or you could open your window and look outside if you were in Melbourne.

Donna McGeorge [00:25:27]:

Yeah, just phone a friend. What's the weather like?

Cec Busby [00:25:36]:

Good old eyes. <laugh> So, any final words for our listeners that might still be feeling a little reluctant?

Donna McGeorge [00:25:42]:

Look, I think anytime we try something new, it feels a bit awkward and difficult. I will tell you that it's one of the easiest tools I've ever come across. I think if you go into it with a bit of curiosity and playfulness, hold it lightly and start a conversation and go back and forth with it as if you were having a conversation, like a text or instant message conversation with it, I think you'll then find it's not at all scary and really very useful.

Cec Busby [00:26:17]:

And you can take action today and you'll probably be very surprised at how quickly you'll be leveraging ChatGPT for a lot of those tasks that used to make you groan.

Donna McGeorge:

Absolutely

Cec Busby:

Awesome. Thank you so much, Donna. It's been really lovely chatting with you today. When is the book out?

Donna McGeorge [00:26:38]:

The book is available for presale right now on all good online stores and it will hit the shelves on the 28 June.

Cec Busby [00:26:48]:

Keep your eyes peeled. I'm sure it'll be at the airport when you're you're waiting to catch your flight and you go to that newsagency at the airport. I'm sure it'll be on one of the stands there. Front and centre.

Donna McGeorge [00:27:01]:

Definitely.

Cec Busby [00:27:02]:

Thank you again. Enjoy the rest of your day. Thanks, Donna.

Donna McGeorge [00:27:06]:

Thanks, Cec.