Microsoft's New Copilot AI Assistant Can Help With Office Tasks — If Your Company Can Afford It

Microsoft's 365 Copilot AI assistant has made its debut. Copilot can summarize Office documents, generate emails, translate notes into plans, and enhance Excel analysis.

However, the new AI add-on is only currently available for an elite group of customers.

Implementing Copilot into a business' work system requires a 300-user commitment, with a $30 price tag for each customer — yep, that's a $9,000 buy-in, The Verge reported.

While Microsoft showcased Copilot extensively during the Surface and AI event in September, the launch of the system on Wednesday has not been heavily publicized, and only Microsoft 365 E3 and E5 commercial subscribers can access Copilot — excluding users still on Office 365 plans and Microsoft 365 Business Standard and Business Premium subscribers. For those who can access the system (Microsoft 365 Monthly Enterprise Channel users) — and are willing to shell out the near-$10k — they won't gain access to Copilot features in December, according to The Verge.

Related: Microsoft Replaced Its News Editors With AI. It's Brought One Disaster After Another — and the Wrath of a Major Publication.

Still, if users buy in, Copilot has the potential to generate

$10 billion in annual revenue by 2026, according to Piper Sandler analysts Brent Bracelin and Hannah Rudoff, per CNBC.

Bracelin added that there may be a "FOMO [fear of missing out]" factor that nudges eligible users to the program.

"If you're in an industry competing against someone that has Copilot and you don't, you're at a disadvantage," Bracelin told the outlet.

Copilot's launch comes against the backdrop of Microsoft's extensive AI investment in recent years, signaling a growing implementation of the technology into its systems. In 2022, Microsoft acquired Nuance Communications, an AI company specializing in voice recognition and software services in the healthcare and telecommunications sectors.

The tech giant also first invested $1 billion in ChatGPT creator OpenAI in 2019, which then spurred an additional $10 billion investment in January, with Microsoft serving as the exclusive provider of computational power for OpenAI's endeavors — a move that could potentially bring over $30 billion in annual revenue for Microsoft, Wells Fargo analyst Michael Turrin told CNBC in April.

Microsoft's AI Use on MSN Under Fire

However, as Microsoft has increasingly implemented AI into its systems, the tech giant has also found itself embroiled in controversy — particularly in the context of its media sites MSN.com and Microsoft Start — due to its increased reliance on AI over human editors, CNN reported.

The Guardian accused the company of "damaging its journalistic reputation" this week after Microsoft republished a piece from the outlet about a woman's tragic death in Australia — alongside an AI-generated poll asking readers about the cause

of the woman’s death: “murder, accident, or suicide.”

In response, a Microsoft spokesperson told the outlet that it had disabled all polls on news articles and would be “investigating.”

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