



AI BUZZ

by Ben Stein, BWI President

As a marine journalist, when someone mentions artificial intelligence or AI you may have a few different reactions. They may range from, AI is coming for my job and I hate it, to some sort of embrace of the work AI can do tweaking your writing. Regardless of your reaction, forget about that type of AI. I'm not here to talk about it. Instead, I'm here to talk about how AI can improve safety aboard boats and why as journalists, we should at least be up to speed on what's happening.

First, let's dig into terminology for a moment. When we think of AI, many of us think of ChatGPT and similar Generative AI tools. Generative AI is fed a prompt of some sort and spits out results. But, when we talk about enhancing safety onboard a boat, we are more likely to be talking about systems that employ neural networks. Neural networks are networks of artificial neurons that process data in a manner that mimics the human brain's processing.

It is worth a mention that AI is as big a buzzword as exists right now in technology. As tends to happen with any buzzword, anything that might fit in any way is rebranded. So, systems that were previously described as automatic,

algorithmic, or assisted are being rebranded as AI. Often, with no change to their capabilities or function.

But, there are companies employing genuine AI to make boating safer. Today, we are seeing AI safety and awareness products from among others Avikus, Lookout, Sea.AI, and Tocarro Blue. These products use a mix of cameras, radar, LiDAR, AIS, and more to help a computer understand the environment around the boat and alert the operator of potential hazards or objects of concern.

These options join existing systems like Garmin's Surround View in providing a view of what's around the boat. But, they build on those systems by providing measurements to and categorizing objects around the boat and highlighting potential dangers.

But, not all systems just use cameras. Tocarro Blue's Proteus differentiator is its ability to read the returns of all four major brands of recreational radar. Proteus analyzes the radar returns and provides a risk ranked view of targets around the boat. Radar provides much greater range than any camera system, but not the same level of precision and

certainty at closer ranges. The result is that products like Proteus might be most useful integrated with camera and LiDAR based systems.

Over time, in order to deliver the greatest accuracy, it is reasonable to expect that developers of these AI safety systems will use multiple types of sensors, called sensor fusion, to leverage the strengths of each sensor type. In time, we will see systems relying on visible light cameras, thermal cameras, radar, sonar, LiDAR, AIS, and more. The combination of all those sensors will enable safety systems to have greater range and confidence as they monitor the waterways to aid an operator.

I cover marine technology for a living and as part of that coverage, I've noticed an interesting pattern with these systems. We, as marine journalists have been invited for some early previews of these systems. **cont. on pg. 2...**



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cont. from pg. 1... We, as marine journalists have been invited for some early previews of these systems. So, you may find yourself on a demo ride of these systems at some point things may not go quite to plan. I would encourage you not to conclude the technology is junk and will never work. Instead, take a moment to think about the herculean task of teaching a computer to process everything we do as operators at the helm.

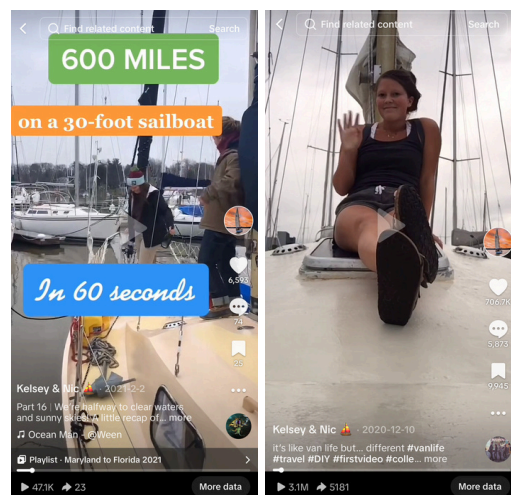
Would I entirely outsource the operation of my boat to one of these systems? No! But maybe not for all the reasons you think. There is an issue of trust and I often have a hard time relinquishing the helm to anyone. But, the bigger issue is that I enjoy being out on the water and operating the boat. I don't think I'm alone in enjoying the craft of boating and hence limiting how much I outsource to a machine. On the other hand, these systems chiming in with alerts and helping enhance safety seems to me like a great thing.

FILMING CRINGE-FREE SOCIAL MEDIA

I wouldn't call myself a social media expert. I made one TikTok one time that, for some reason, 3.1 million people decided was worth watching – but I chalk that up to luck.

I do have one real qualification in this arena, however: I happen to be a proud member of Gen Z, which means most of what is fed to me on social media is also what appeals to the rest of my generation. I can see what works and what doesn't, and what other 20- to 30-somethings find cool or cringeworthy. And since my generation is often the one responsible for things online going viral, sorry, but if you want your content to go somewhere, you'll probably have to appeal to my Gen Z and Millennial kin!

The foundation of all social media content is the filming. If you're going to a boat show, facility tour, or sea trial and are hoping to capture some content on the way, here are some tips to help make sure you film it right the first time.



Make a Plan

Although some of the best content is spontaneous, most good content requires a plan. Like writing, you need to go in with an outline of the story you want to tell. If you're filming a boat walkthrough, for example, do a walkthrough without the camera first so you know what you want to highlight. Also consider what platform you're shooting for. Although some video can be recycled, the best content is purpose-made for a particular platform and its unique viewer habits. Consider whether something should be filmed vertically or horizontally, and what size screen most viewers will watch it on – for phone viewing in particular, try using 0.5 zoom to make everything feel bigger.

Be Self-Conscious

Don't be shy, but be aware of yourself and your surroundings. If you're behind the camera, don't let any fingers creep into the edges or toes peek up from the bottom. Look out for any mirrors or reflections that could make for an awkward encounter. Be conscious of time and move faster than you think you need to, especially for short-form content: the average attention span of my fellow Gen Z-ers is 8 seconds! **cont. on pg. 3...**

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Follow the Crowd

If you’re new to content creation, you can accidentally give that away with seemingly minor style and design choices. Speaking too formally and using overly bright colors, PowerPoint-style transitions, or trying-too-hard fonts (put that Papyrus away!) are dead giveaways that you’re out of your element. Spend time watching the kinds of videos you hope to emulate and pay special attention to the camera angles they use, the way they speak, and how they cut and put the whole thing together.

Practice, Even if You Feel Silly

Talking to a phone camera feels unnatural. Boldly filming in a public space feels unnatural. There’s an odd expectation that because everyone has a phone, everyone must be able to just grab some content “on the way” to whatever else they’re doing, but social media is a skill that requires practice like any other! Try filming a walkthrough of your house as if you were a real estate agent, or explaining how to cook a favorite recipe while you do it. Keep doing that until you can rewatch those videos and not cringe, and you’ll be ready for prime time.

Kelsey Bonham Bailey is a member of the BWI Board of Directors & Associate Editor of BoatUS Magazine.

GENERAL NEWS

ADVERTISING OFFERED IN 2025 BWI ANNUAL DIRECTORY

It’s that time again when we will be creating the BWI Annual Directory which will be distributed this summer. And once again, BWI will be accepting advertising in a special section to highlight our Supporting Member businesses. The digital directory is distributed to all current Active and Supporting members. Price is \$300 for a 4-color, full page ad in the front section. Please contact Executive Director, Zuzana Prochazka at info@bwi.org to place an ad or with questions.

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