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Ozempic Maker Says AI Is Finally Reliable Enough to Produce Sensitive Documents



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By Aaron Holmes and Jon Victor

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Multinational companies in regulated industries like pharmaceuticals and insurance have been somewhat reluctant to adopt generative artificial intelligence to handle legally sensitive documents due to the risk of AI-generated mistakes.

That seems to be changing. Take Novo Nordisk, the Danish drugmaker behind Ozempic. The company for years has tested chatbots such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and models such as Meta Platforms' Llama to help write documents it files to regulators when submitting a drug for approval, but the technology has been prone to errors, said Louise Lind Skov, who leads the company's tech strategy. Sometimes it could take employees more time to correct the AI errors than if they'd done everything by hand in the first place, she said.

It wasn't until Novo started testing Anthropic's Claude 3.5 Sonnet model last fall that the company found the number of errors fell significantly, said Waheed Jowiya, a strategy director overseeing its use of AI. Novo Nordisk now uses Claude to draft clinical study reports based on data that human researchers collected during a study. These documents, which describe the results of a drug trial, can be hundreds of pages apiece.

Humans still oversee Claude as it drafts the report, essentially by pointing and clicking at data and asking Claude to describe it in plain English, Jowiya said. Novo uses Claude through an interface that it built using Amazon Web Services software, he said.

And Novo used a common method for reducing AI mistakes: retrieval-augmented generation. For instance, when Claude generates a clinical definition of obesity that a human expert determines is good, the human will tell Claude to reuse the description in any future documents that concern trials on obesity.

That practice has drastically brought down the time it takes to draft those documents, from around 15 weeks to less than 10 minutes, according to Skov. Such documents previously involved more than 50 writers but are now handled by just three human writers using Claude, she said. Novo Nordisk spends less than one writer's salary on Claude annually, she said.

The savings allowed the companies to hire people in other departments, she said. The company hasn't laid off any staff writers—who are now more productive—but plans to hire fewer of them, she said.

"This efficiency gain...[means] we're able to do the same or more work with fewer people," Skov said.

The company is now exploring how to use AI models for other parts of the drug approval process, such as to build AI agents that would take over the review process, which involves double-checking document submissions to make sure they comply with various laws.

"We went from experimentation to development very fast, and in the pharma industry it's rare to move that quickly," Skov said.

Falling AI Costs Mean More Call Center Automation

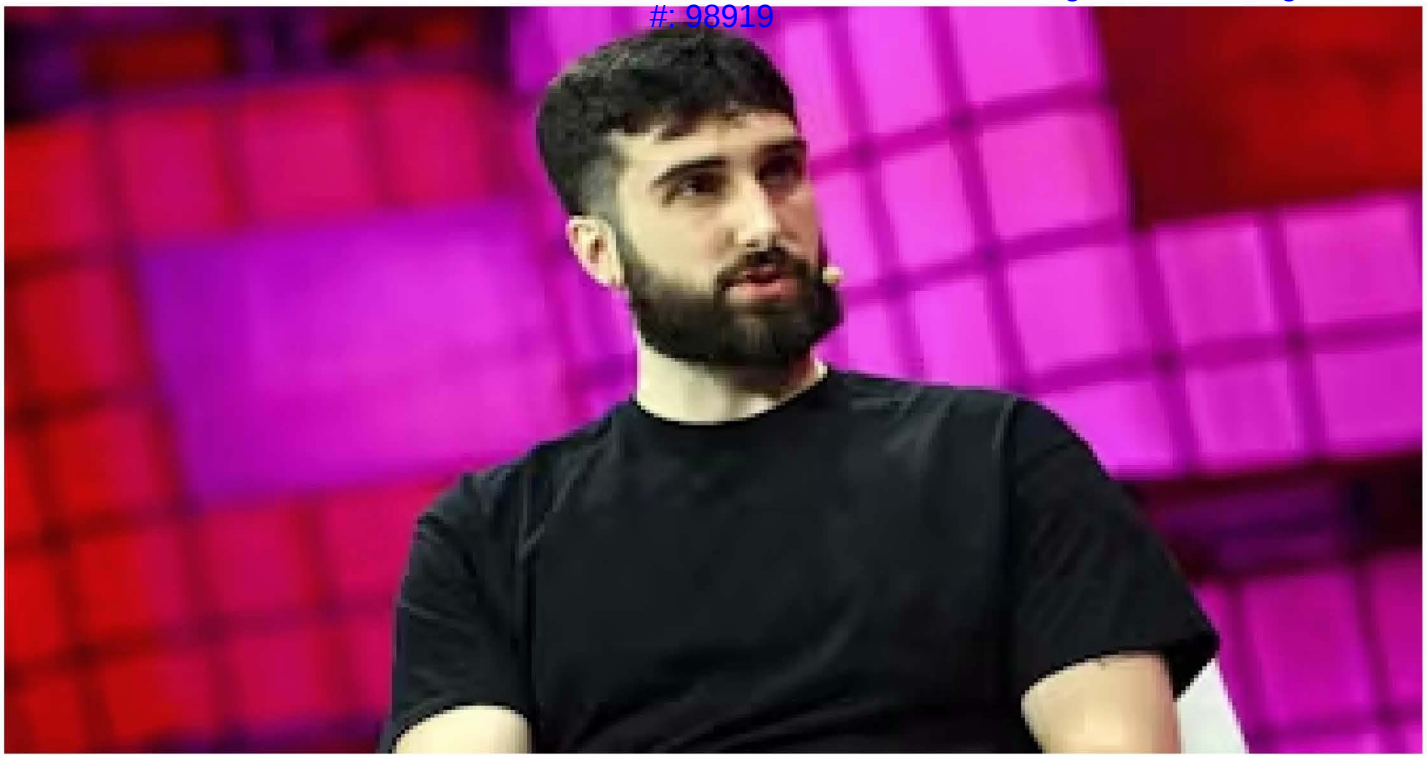
As the cost of running high-quality AI models falls, one application that is becoming more affordable and reliable is AI-powered customer service voice agents. Most customer service still happens by phone, and the latest voice modes of popular chatbots like ChatGPT show the technology is capable of carrying on complex verbal conversations.

That explains why customer support software firm Zendesk on Monday said it would acquire Local Measure, an Australian company specializing in voice support. The company uses Amazon's AI software to assist human agents and automatically resolve cases.

Companies that sell technology for automating text-based customer service, including Zendesk, Intercom and OpenAI, have all introduced products that handle voice. But Andrei Papancea, CEO and co-founder of NLX, a provider of text- and voice-based AI customer service software, said adoption of phone call automation is still behind text-based conversations because voice "can get prohibitively expensive."

Papancea said costs for voice-based AI are falling, thanks to innovations like DeepSeek's R1. That will make it easier for NLX and other providers to add AI voice support, he said. While businesses have long used more basic automation for phone calls (like asking a caller what type of query they have, or asking for their account number or birth date), the latest models would handle a wider range of support cases.—*Jon Victor*

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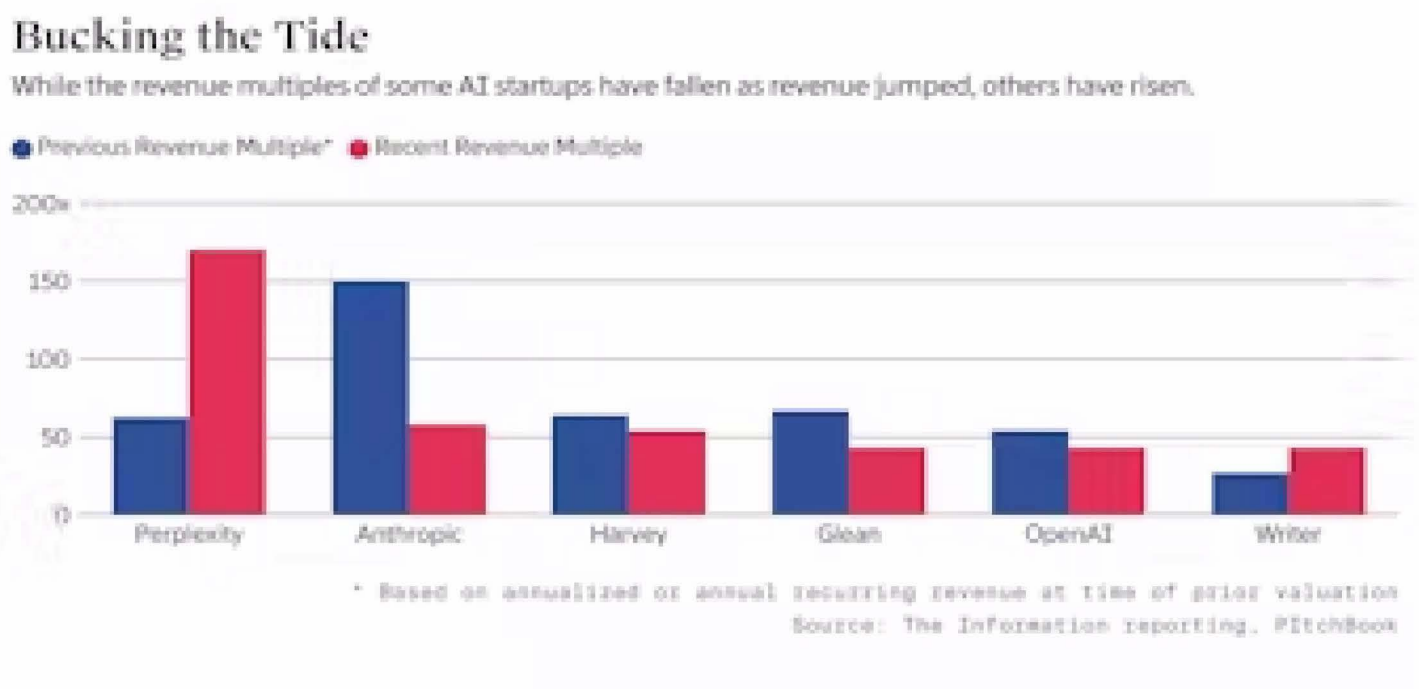
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