Stanford eCorner

Is Developing AI Worth the Money?

Sam Altman, *OpenAI*

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Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, says he doesn't worry about how much his company is spending to develop more advanced AI models. In fact, he's embarrassed by their existing products, but he explains the advantages of iterative deployment for letting society coevolve with technology.

Transcript

- Open AI is phenomenal.. 00:00:03,510 ChatGPT's phenomenal.. Everything else, all the other models are phenomenal.. You've earned $520 million of cash last year.. That doesn't concern you in terms of thinking about the economic model of how do you actually, where it's gonna be the monetization source.. - Well first of all, that's nice of you to say, 00:00:20,610 but ChatGPT is not phenomenal.. Like ChatGPT is like mildly embarrassing at best.. GPT-4 is the dumbest model any of you will ever, ever have to use again by a lot.. But you know, it's like important to ship early and often.. And we believe in iterative deployment..

Like if we go build AGI in a basement and then, you know, the world is like kind of blissfully walking blindfolded along.. I don't think that's like, I don't think that makes us like very good neighbors.. So I think it's important given what we believe is going to happen to our express our view about what we believe is gonna happen.. But more than that, the way to do it is to put the product in people's hands and let society co-evolve with the technology.. Let society tell us what it collectively and people individually want from the technology.. How to productize this in a way that's gonna be useful.. Where the model works really well, where it doesn't work really well.. Give our leaders and institutions time to react.. Give people time to figure out how to integrate this into their lives, to learn how to use the tool.. I'm sure some of you all like cheat on your homework with it, but some of y'all probably do like very amazing, wonderful things with it too..

And as each generation goes on, I think that will expand and that means that we ship imperfect products, but we have a very tight feedback loop and we learn and we get better.. And it does kind of suck to ship a product that you're embarrassed about, but it's much better than the alternative.. And in this case in particular, where I think we really owe it to society to deploy iteratively, one thing we've learned is that AI and surprise don't go well together.. People don't wanna be surprised.. People want a gradual rollout and the ability to influence these systems.. That's how we're gonna do it.. And there could totally be things in the future that would change where we think iterative deployment isn't such a good strategy.. But it does feel like the current best approach that we have.. And I think we've gained a lot from doing this.. And, you know, hopefully the larger world has gained something too..

Whether we burn 500 million a year or 5 billion or 50 billion a year, I don't care.. I genuinely don't, as long as we can, I

think stay on the trajectory where eventually we create way more value for society than that.. And as long as we can figure out a way to pay the bills, like we're making AGI, it's gonna be expensive.. It's totally worth it...