5 AI Opportunities for B2B Publishers in 2025

How AI, machine learning and an entrepreneurial spirit can elevate traditional B2B publishers into intelligence companies.

Overview

Generative AI and machine learning have the potential to transform the financial and operational dynamics of traditional B2B publishing. New services offer a useful toolkit for unlocking revenue streams, driving cost efficiencies, and enhancing market positioning.

While numerous publishers have dabbled with AI tools, most existing use cases are limited to "back-office" functionality such as automating transcription, copy editing, generating headlines and managing layout. Helpful, yes, but unlikely to transform the fortunes of any traditional publishing business.

There's also valid anxiety about applying AI tools at the heart of a newsroom. Publishers are justifiably worried the rise of companies like OpenAI are a threat not only to business models but to journalism itself. *The New York Times* is suing the owner of ChatGPT over claims its copyright was infringed to train the system.

Such companies do pose potential threats – as they do in many industries – but AI tools in general also represent huge journalistic and commercial opportunities for traditional B2B publishing as *Flare Data*'s clients are already experiencing.

This brief report explores 5 areas of strategic opportunity for B2B publishers in 2025:

1. Becoming Intelligence Providers
2. Data-led Product Creation
3. Working with LLM Companies
4. Elevating Editorial
5. Embedding AI into Workflow

1. Transforming B2B Publishers into Intelligence Providers

AI and machine learning (ML) technologies can empower publishers to transition from traditional content providers to intelligence companies in their chosen market. This shift positions them in the more lucrative market for actionable insights, real-time analytics, and strategic forecasting—a space traditionally dominated by consultancies and research firms.

By leveraging AI to deliver data-driven solutions, publishers can create new revenue streams, build stronger client relationships, and solidify their roles as indispensable partners for business decision-making.

The Opportunity: From Information to Intelligence

In the past, B2B publishers focused on delivering industry news, trends, and reports. While valuable, this model often left them competing for subscriber attention in a crowded market. The intelligence marketplace offers a higher-value proposition: delivering actionable insights, predictive analytics, and strategic recommendations tailored to client needs.

AI and ML tools are key enablers of this transformation. Some, like *Flare Data*, allow publishers to collect, analyse, and interpret vast datasets in near real time, converting raw information into actionable insights. This capability differentiates intelligence products from standard news or reports, transforming publishers into intelligence providers and justifying premium pricing models such as subscription tiers, bespoke dashboards, or data-driven consultancy services.

A publisher serving the financial sector, for example, might use AI to track market sentiment, highlight risks, or detect early signals and patterns in market behaviour that could yield opportunities for their audiences. This real-time intelligence, long adopted by companies such as *Bloomberg*, provides professional audience with a competitive edge, as they can respond to opportunities or threats faster than their competitors.

Predictive Analytics and Trend Forecasting

One of AI's most valuable contributions is its ability to support forecasting. By analysing historical data and identifying patterns, ML models can help publishers predict shifts in market dynamics, consumer behaviour, or emerging technologies.

For example, a B2B publisher covering retail could use AI to predict e-commerce growth in specific regions. Such insights help businesses allocate resources effectively, making them invaluable for strategic decision-making. Predictive analytics also strengthen the publisher’s value proposition beyond descriptive reporting.

Automation and Workflow Optimisation

By automating data collection, aggregation, and analysis, publishers can significantly reduce operational costs and accelerate delivery.

For instance, there are tools that can scrape and clean datasets from public or proprietary sources, perform sentiment analysis, or generate visual dashboards that distil complex insights into accessible formats. Such tools remove the need for specialist teams to conduct these tasks and allow publishers to focus their journalists and editors on high-value tasks, such as customising insights for key clients or supporting in the development of new products.

For example, a publisher working with healthcare companies might provide tailored intelligence on emerging drug approvals, regulatory updates, or competitor activity. Similarly, a publisher serving the energy sector could create customised dashboards tracking renewable energy investments, global oil prices, or regional energy policies.

These bespoke solutions not only enhance client satisfaction but also open the door to premium pricing models and long-term contracts.

“We are achieving considerable efficiency savings using *Flare Data*'s capabilities and are exploring providing even more insights for our subscribers from our data. We have now moved on to more products in our department.”

Graeme Davies, managing editor, Financial Times

Competing with Consultancies

AI-driven intelligence products allow publishers to compete directly with top-tier consultancies in terms of thought leadership. By offering real-time insights, predictive analytics, and tailored recommendations, publishers can deliver strategic value comparable to that of firms like McKinsey or Deloitte—often at a lower cost.

Furthermore, AI democratises access to advanced analytics tools, enabling even mid-sized publishers to create sophisticated intelligence platforms for targeted and niche audiences.

For instance, a UK-based publisher serving the manufacturing industry could use AI to analyse supply chain disruptions or forecast material costs, offering insights previously limited to large consulting firms.

Monetising Intelligence Products

The intelligence marketplace supports lucrative revenue models that go beyond standard subscriptions. Publishers can generate revenue through:

1. **Premium Subscriptions:** Offering access to real-time dashboards, predictive analytics, and exclusive reports.
2. **Licensing Data:** Selling aggregated datasets or insights to third-party organisations.
3. **Bespoke Intelligence Services:** Providing tailored insights or consultancy to high-value clients.
4. **Partnerships:** Collaborating with industry associations or companies to co-develop intelligence products.

By diversifying revenue streams, publishers reduce reliance on advertising or basic subscriptions, creating a more sustainable business model. Not only does this reduce the risks of competing in a crowded content market but also positions publishers as strategic partners in their clients' decision-making processes.
As AI continues to evolve, the opportunity for publishers to lead in the intelligence space will only grow, marking a new era of data-driven success in B2B media.

"Elsevier delivered **10% increase in profitability** in 2023… driven by the business mix towards higher-growth information-based analytics and decision tools"

Erik Engstrom, CEO, Elsevier

2. AI for Data-Led Product Creation in Publishing

Publishing revenue streams primarily consist of subscription sales, events, licensing agreements, and advertising. Subscriptions—whether for digital content, niche reports, or newsletters—are particularly lucrative in the B2B space, where audiences are willing to pay for reliable, industry-specific insights. Similarly, licensing arrangements allow publishers to monetise proprietary data or content by granting external organisations access to their archives, analytics, or aggregated datasets.

Streamlining Product Development

Launching subscription products often requires gathering and curating data, whether its industry statistics, regulatory updates, or market insights. AI simplifies this process through automation, reducing both time and labour costs.

This efficiency is particularly valuable for creating licencing products. Publishers can use AI to process internal archives, aggregate key insights, and present them in formats tailored for clients, such as interactive dashboards or regularly updated datasets.

"In terms of building a data-led business, evolving technologies have slashed the cost of innovation offering publishers a chance to catapult forward without the need for the heavy investments of the past. In that sense, the rules have been ripped up."

Phil Clark, B2B publishing consultant

Enhancing Subscriptions with Personalised Offerings

AI service providers can also enable publishers to reduce churn and boost subscription revenue through personalisation. ML algorithms analyse user behaviour—such as content consumption patterns, time spent on pages, or subscription history—to deliver tailored recommendations that keep users engaged.

For example, a financial publisher might use AI to recommend articles on emerging markets to a subscriber who frequently reads content about investment opportunities.

Similarly, AI can segment audiences and create tiered subscription models, offering premium content or additional features to high-value customers. Personalised offerings not only increase the perceived value of a subscription but also justify higher pricing tiers, directly contributing to revenue growth.

For example, natural language processing (NLP) algorithms can analyse vast quantities of text, such as industry publications, search trends, or social media conversations, to identify topics gaining traction. A B2B publisher might use this insight to develop a subscription product focusing on a trending niche—such as ESG reporting or AI's role in healthcare
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By identifying profitable niches, streamlining development processes, and enabling personalised offerings, these technologies optimise the success of subscription and licensing models. AI not only minimises the costs of trial-and-error but also ensures publishers can confidently deliver impactful products that meet audience needs.

To understand how we work with our clients, contact sam@flaredata.ai

3. Gain Leverage with Generative AI Companies

Exclusive content, especially when derived from proprietary data, represents a critical asset for publishers and an essential resource for large language model (LLM) technology companies – OpenAI probably being the most well-known.

As LLMs grow in capability and influence, the demand for high-quality training data has intensified, creating a dynamic where content providers and AI developers find themselves in a complex relationship. This relationship is shaped by the publishers' need to protect their intellectual property and monetise their output, and the LLM companies' dependence on high-calibre, domain-specific content to enhance model performance.

For LLM companies, the quality of the data they use for training is directly proportional to the performance and marketability of their models. Generic, widely available datasets can only take models so far; specialised, nuanced content is necessary to advance their capabilities.

Exclusive content from publishers is often rich in context, expert insights, and domain-specific knowledge—critical for training LLMs to excel in fields like law, medicine, or finance. For instance, investigative reporting or proprietary market analysis offers a depth of understanding that open datasets like *Wikipedia* simply cannot match.

Moreover, as regulatory scrutiny of AI systems grows, LLM developers are under pressure to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in their training processes.

> Microsoft secured a $10m agreement to use Taylor and Francis' repository of papers to train its AI systems. Wiley, a similar academic publisher, reported $23m in earnings from a deal with an unnamed tech firm, with an additional $21m expected within the year.
>
> *Source: Interesting Engineering, 2024*

Exclusive, vetted content from reputable publishers provides a defensible source of high-quality training material that reduces the risk of bias or misinformation creeping into their models. Such content is also attractive because it allows companies to differentiate their models, enabling them to claim better reliability and expertise than competitors using publicly available datasets.

Leverage for Publishers: The Power of Ownership

For publishers, exclusive data-driven content is both a source of competitive advantage and a potential bargaining chip in negotiations with AI companies. Because LLMs are hungry for data, publishers with unique, high-quality materials can position themselves as indispensable partners or gatekeepers, commanding licensing fees for access to their archives. This is especially true in domains where trusted sources are limited. For example, a financial publisher with decades of historical market data can charge a premium for access, knowing LLM developers cannot discover this information elsewhere.

The Challenge of Copyright and Unauthorised Use

However, the relationship between LLM developers and publishers is tense. Publishers face a persistent challenge: ensuring their content is not scraped, copied, or used without authorisation. The very nature of web-based AI training often involves large-scale crawling of online content, and distinguishing between fair use and copyright infringement remains a grey area.

This lack of clear legal frameworks leaves publishers vulnerable, as their proprietary work can be ingested into models without proper compensation or attribution. High-profile lawsuits, such as those brought by artists and media organisations, like *The New York Times*, against LLM companies highlight the growing urgency for publishers to assert their intellectual rights.

Balancing Collaboration and Regulation

To address these tensions, publishers and LLM companies should consider exploring collaborative models that align incentives. Licensing agreements, revenue-sharing models, or partnerships where publishers provide exclusive datasets in exchange for AI-generated tools tailored to their needs are promising pathways. Governments and regulators, too, must clarify the boundaries of copyright in the AI age, ensuring a fair playing field for both parties.

LLM companies' insatiable demand for high-quality data underscores the strategic importance of protecting proprietary content. As the AI industry matures, publishers will need to adopt robust policies and negotiate aggressively to ensure they are compensated for the invaluable role their exclusive content plays in shaping the future of AI.

4. Empowering Journalists to be Market Leaders

Journalists play a critical role in delivering the knowledge and insights that drive decision-making for professional audiences. Far from replacing journalists, AI and machine learning tools can enhance their ability to create exclusive, high-value content that puts pure “AI chatbot” content to shame.

These technologies enable journalists to analyse data more efficiently, uncover trends, and extract actionable insights, elevating their expertise to the level of consultants or analysts. Trust has always been a crucial ingredient in the relationship between a writer and their audience. According to research compiled by the *Reuters Institute*, people who tend to trust the news in general are also more likely to be comfortable with uses of AI where journalists remain in control. We don’t see this changing anytime soon.

Enhancing Thought Leadership and Expertise

A journalist covering financial markets could leverage AI to forecast economic shifts or identify investment opportunities by analysing historical data and market indicators. Similarly, a journalist in the healthcare sector might use AI to predict the adoption of emerging medical technologies based on patent filings, clinical trials, or funding trends.

By consistently delivering insightful, forward-thinking content, journalists elevate their profiles, becoming indispensable to their audiences. Working with companies like *Flare Data*, a journalist can very quickly extract insights from public data sets to offer unique angles and cement the value of a story.

Far from replacing human creativity, AI amplifies it, allowing journalists to meet professional audiences’ needs.

> “It’s easy to lump AI into one homogenous blob and assume it to be dangerous or inaccessible. However, there are many AI-tools that can support publishers in generating new revenue. You just have to look out for them.”
>
> *Daniel Flatt, co-founder, Flare Data*

Needing More Time

From aggregating statistics to identifying relevant case studies or sources, traditional research methods often require significant manual effort. One of the biggest pressures on journalists is to find the time to research their subject while hitting increasingly tough deadlines. AI and ML tools streamline this process by automating the collection, cleaning, and analysis of data.

For example, NLP algorithms can sift through vast quantities of unstructured text—such as reports, news articles, or social media posts—to extract key themes or identify emerging trends.

A journalist covering the renewable energy sector, for example, could use AI to analyse government policies, track investment patterns, or pinpoint innovations in solar technology. By automating these tasks, journalists gain more time to interpret findings, conduct interviews, and craft compelling narratives.

AI also enables journalists to discover insights that might otherwise remain hidden. Machine learning models can detect subtle patterns in data, such as correlations between economic indicators and industry performance, offering journalists a fresh angle to explore – an approach clients of *Flare Data* employ to break exclusive stories or provide deeper context, enhancing their authority and credibility.

For instance, a journalist writing about supply chain disruptions in manufacturing could use AI to analyse shipment delays, price fluctuations, or trade policies across different regions. By generating compelling charts, heatmaps, or dashboards, they can present complex information in an intuitive, reader-friendly format.

To learn more, please contact daniel@flaredata.ai

5. AI to Streamline Workflow

AI and machine learning technologies enable publishers to acquire, interpret, and extract actionable insights from massive amounts of data with unparalleled speed and operational efficiencies, positioning publishers to make better-informed decisions and deliver more impactful content to their audiences.

Data Acquisition: Automating Collection

For publishers, acquiring data from internal systems or external public sources is a foundational but labour-intensive process. AI and ML services, such as those provided by *Flare Data*, streamline this process by automating the data-acquisition pipeline.

By reducing the time and resources spent on acquiring data, publishers can allocate more of their efforts toward analysing and applying this information. Moreover, automation minimises the risk of human error and ensures that datasets are comprehensive and up to date.

Interpretation: Turning Data into Actionable Insights

Once data is acquired, the challenge shifts to interpretation—making sense of massive datasets to uncover patterns, trends, and opportunities. This is an area where AI and ML excel, particularly in processing vast quantities of information that would overwhelm human analysts.

For instance, ML algorithms can cluster similar data points, flag anomalies, or identify patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed. A publisher working with internal subscriber data might use AI to analyse behaviour patterns and discover key drivers of churn or engagement. Meanwhile, ML tools applied to public datasets, such as government statistics or market reports, can uncover correlations that inform editorial strategies or new product development.

Time Savings: Accelerating Processes Across the Board

Time is a critical factor in the fast-paced publishing world. AI and ML dramatically accelerate every stage of data handling, from acquisition to interpretation. Tasks that once took days or weeks—such as aggregating data from multiple sources or conducting detailed trend analysis—can now be completed in minutes.

This reduces reliance on manual data processing, which can be slow and prone to delays. The ability to act on insights in near real-time is particularly advantageous for publishers covering dynamic industries like technology, finance, or healthcare, where timeliness is essential for maintaining relevance.

Accuracy: Reducing Human Error and Enhancing Consistency

Human error is a persistent issue in manual data handling, leading to incomplete or inaccurate insights that can derail strategic decisions. AI and ML tools mitigate this risk by applying consistent algorithms to data processing tasks, ensuring reliability and accuracy.

AI can standardise datasets from multiple sources, ensuring uniform formatting and eliminating discrepancies. Additionally, ML models are continually improving through iterative training, allowing them to refine their analyses and deliver increasingly accurate results over time.

> "As well as providing excellent AI-assisted data capabilities, *Flare Data* advised on business model and go to market strategies. AI has changed our ability to operate; the investment risk vs return equation has changed substantially."
>
> *Robin Booth, managing director, emap*

Get Going

While the integration of generative AI and machine learning in B2B publishing brings challenges, it also unlocks transformative opportunities. Beyond streamlining back-office functions, AI has the potential to redefine core operations, fostering innovation in content creation, audience engagement, and revenue diversification.

Concerns surrounding its impact on journalism and business models are valid but can be mitigated through thoughtful application and strategic foresight. As B2B publishers navigate these shifts, embracing AI-driven solutions will be pivotal to staying competitive. We strongly advise not sitting on the side line or tinkering on the edges of AI.

Find out more about how *Flare Data* is working with B2B publishers to support their business transformation.

Ask a founder:

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