

What was once a rare skill is now something AI does best, says **Mathures Paul**

Vibe coding, its pros and cons

Want a custom workout plan? Build an app for it. Had a great idea at 2am? Build an app for that too. Even a couple of years ago, software meant engaging well-paid professional developers. That is changing.

Lawyers, doctors, schools and ordinary users now have access to programming tools like no generation before them has ever had. Software has always been built for the masses, and now it is being designed by the masses too, through something called vibe coding. All one now needs is an idea and a monthly subscription (around ₹2,000) to something like Anthropic's Claude Code, GitHub Copilot, Cursor, Lovable or Replit.

The term "vibe coding" was coined by Andrej Karpathy, a founding member of OpenAI, to describe a process of computer programming akin to having a conversation with a robot. Users simply need to describe what they want in plain English, and tools like ChatGPT or Claude Code will help accomplish it. AI writes the code for the user.

Although this way of building has helped small businesses and hobbyists create their own software, it is professionals who are leading the way. At its core, the practice means giving into the vibes rather than working from a clear, fully formed vision. It becomes a process of working alongside the Large Language Model, trying to get somewhere with it, rather than dictating every step in advance.

It takes time to gather all the receipts into a single file for an accountant to peruse. Using this approach, a cafe owner can write a script that takes all the PDFs of bills in one folder and turns them into a single document. A researcher, similarly, may have a large collection of PDFs that would be more useful as text files, or a text file that would work better

as a spreadsheet. AI-assisted coding can take care of that too, just as easily as it can write a script to resize a folder full of images to consistent dimensions before they go up on a blog.

That shift is reshaping roles as much as it is reshaping software. Software development has traditionally involved certain fixed skills. That is now shifting. Imagine a future where 100 million, or even a billion, people can make any software they desire. It may sound like a nightmare for professional coders, but the role of the software engineer is evolving into one that looks like management. Many engineers will oversee a virtual team of agents, and will still be the ones who own the outcomes.

Frank Nagle, a research scientist at the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy, and his team surveyed over 1.87,000 software developers using GitHub Copilot. They found that workers are more productive because what they spend their time on has changed.

A study by Erik Brynjolfsson and researchers at Stanford's Digital Economy Lab found a 16 per cent decline in early-career employment across the most AI-exposed occupations since late 2022. Companies focused on short-term gains could be making a costly mistake about long-term talent. If companies do not hire enough new people now, who will run them in future?

Nagle's team noted that it is these younger, tech-native junior employees who are actually best placed to adapt, change jobs and get the absolute most out of using these tools. This kind of personal software has its limits. These bespoke apps do not come with a support line or a customer service team, and they carry no security guarantees. The idea that large companies will ditch expensive enterprise software for something their marketing department has knocked together themselves remains the stuff of dreams.

AI & You



TIPS TO GET STARTED

- Find a repetitive, boring task — like converting data formats or resizing images — where you can describe the problem and the desired outcome to the AI in two sentences
- When using ChatGPT or Claude, explicitly state your skill level
- Never give an AI tool free access to your entire computer
- You don't need to be a programmer to scan code for danger. Look out for commands that look like unfamiliar website URLs, ask for system passwords or use destructive words like delete or rm
- Before letting an AI modify a script that already works, manually duplicate the file (for example, my_script_v1_backup)
- Vibe coding works best for low-stakes, internal tasks. For anything that touches sensitive customer data, financial transactions or public security, bring in a professional software engineer to review the code.