VerifiedHuman™
People win.

Micah Voraritskul

Artificial Intelligence and
VERIFIEDHUMAN

by Carolyn Dirksen, PhD

In March, more than 1,000 leaders of the tech industry signed a letter calling for a moratorium on the development of Artificial Intelligence [AI], stating that it poses "profound risks to society and humanity." By the end of May, the letter had 27,000 signatures including Elon Musk, founder of Neuralink and Open AI, and Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Computer. Also in March, Boris Eldagsen won the Sony World Photography competition with an AI-generated image that went undetected by the expert panel of judges. Very little has happened since these events to halt the rapid development of AI, and the fearful rhetoric has not subsided. As dire predictions continue to swirl, Lee alum Micah Voraritskul is gamely tackling one aspect of the problem through his new company VerifiedHuman.

"We are living in a world where we can't tell the difference between something created by a computer and something created by a human being," Voraritskul says. "But what's even worse, we are headed toward a world in which the assumption is that AI made this — unless we can prove otherwise." Proving otherwise has become Voraritskul's focus and passion. After some basic research, he discovered that there were two main ways of approaching the issue — legislation and technology. "The legislative solution says, 'We're going to pass laws and strengthen copyrights,' but immediately, the amateur sociologist in me says, 'but people aren't motivated by laws. They're motivated by ethics.'" Voraritskul also notes, "People are putting a lot of hope in technological solutions, but I can beat the best AI detection software in 30 seconds, so that's not good. Furthermore, to have AI ratting itself out is exactly like that movie 'War Games' where you have a computer playing an endless game of chess against itself. It's a dog chasing its own tail."

Voraritskul sees the necessity of a purely human solution to this technological problem. "There has to be something in us as human beings that we can bring to this issue. We are survivors, and we've always adapted. Right now, we aren't proposing solutions that leverage one of the greatest human attributes—the value of trust." So with trust and ethics as his cornerstones, Voraritskul has set out to build a model for the verification of human creativity. The end result is VerifiedHuman, which, according to its website is "an organization that offers values-based labels for human-created content." To create VerifiedHuman, which is very much still a work in progress, Voraritskul pulled together an impressive think tank. "I started calling my friends who are heads of schools, or engineers, or professional photographers or film makers to help me with this. It's a cool collective of really smart, good people from across age groups, income levels, and professional backgrounds."

Working with the think tank, Voraritskul developed standards for writing, graphic arts, and music to define the boundaries of human creation. "We are putting a standard out there that says, 'I made this. A machine didn't make it.' That starts with some really clear definitions that are not encumbered with a lot of legal language." In the standard, VerifiedHuman articulates the very specific meaning of human creation for each field. Standards include three levels of human creation: Verified Human indicates that the entire work was done without AI assistance. AI Assisted (AIA) indicates that some phase of the work was AI generated, but the most significant part was done by the human creator. AI Unknown (AIU) indicates that it is unknown whether part of the work was AI generated, but the final product is the result of human effort.

"The purpose of the standards is to mark a space in time when you agree to a very specific thing. If that standard gets violated somewhere down the line, we can say, 'Remember when you signed this covenant promising to do this work in this way? Well, you didn't, and now we're having a conversation about why that trust was breached.'"

The plan is that creators will sign up for VerifiedHuman, and once they have agreed to the standard for their craft, they will receive a badge, indicating to consumers that their work has been created by a human being. "Right now, it's free. We don't have a ton of people signing up yet, but every day there are a few more. I anticipate that we will have tens of thousands of people in every category over time. We have some really cool people who are already on board." VerifiedHuman's extensive website includes detailed information about the standards and about the hopes of the organization.

verifiedhuman.info

"As FairTrade is for coffee, VerifiedHuman is for creative output," Voraritskul explains. "Our verification system is rooted in creators valuing the trust of their audience and being honest about how they make their work. They're stepping up and saying, 'I am the person who made this for you. Voraritskul launched the website in May and is cautiously optimistic about the future. "We are humbly confident that we are on the right track," he says, "But we know that we have not totally figured it out. We're trying to do something because something is better than nothing."

"I'm excited. I've had moments when I've thought, 'What am I doing? This is something that touches almost everyone on the planet,' Voraritskul says, "But in some ways it's been easy. Having been a pastor and an educator and a missionary prepared me with friends around the world who have responded to my requests and brought an immense wealth of ideas to the process. It's as if all the threads of my life have led me to this moment."