Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations and Communications: cases, reflections and predictions

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Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations and Communications: cases, reflections, and predictions – an introduction and overview

Ana Adi

The old new buzzword...

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not new. We've been imagining and thinking about a world where robots (independent or not, sentient or not, good and bad) will be living alongside humans for decades – and we've been fascinated and scared by the prospect of such a world in equal measure. The list of books is long including Heinlein's 1966 *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress to the more recent Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. The movies list is there to match it: from *Terminator* to *Wall-E*, from *Minority Report* to *Big Hero 6,* from *Ex Machina* to *Bicentennial Man*. Yet, somehow, this year these scenarios felt closer to reality thanks to the hype created by several generative AI and large language models starting with Open AI's *ChatGPT* followed by Google's *BARD*, Meta's *LaMDA*, *BingAI*, *Jasper Chat* and *Claude*.

According to a recent McKinsey Report (2023), "interest in the topic (as gauged by news and internet searches) increased threefold from 2021 to 2022"; due to generative AI making "a loud entrance" and showing "potential for transformative business impact".

For communicators, where the cloud of big data was already looming threateningly, AI is a whole new level of good and bad news all in one.

In Virmani and Gregory's (2021) *The AI and Big Data Readiness report,* released by the CIPR in 2021, participants completing the study (n=280) expressed excitement about big data and AI despite the fact that a significant number of respondents indicated that they had limited knowledge around the technical aspects of both big data and AI. The same year, the *European Communication Monitor* (Zerfass et al., 2021) was claiming that:

"**Digital transformation** is in progress, but few communication departments or agencies have reached maturity – 39% of practitioners across Europe describe their unit as

immature in both digitalising stakeholder communications and building digital infrastructure".

In short, PR/Comms practitioners are excited about something they know little of and have little experience with.

And yet, technology in its many forms has always been of interest to PR/Comms. Wrapped in its promise of bigger, faster, better results, technology has been associated with efficiency (resources related, so time, money and people) and effectiveness (impact). Arguably, it is technology and its promises that have led to a stronger demand for better measurement in communication. This however also led to the propagation of vanity metrics in PR/Comms reporting, a practice to be attributed both to client demands and to PR/Comms practitioners' poor understanding of how technology works. In fact, historically, PR/Comms practitioners have systematically seen themselves as lagging behind when it comes to acquisition and application of technical skills, yet, despite their demands for such training, "they continue to overwhelmingly be offered further communication training/development opportunities" (Adi, 2019, p. 10). Moreover, in doing so, they are also left to their own devices to experiment, explore, and learn about technology and its impact both on their own work and that of the organizations, institutions, or clients they work with.

This brings up a variety of questions:

- How are PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators responding to the AI challenge?
- How are PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators including it into their work, including insight, measurement and evaluation?
- What are the concerns and predictions that PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators raise when it comes to use and abuse or AI in PR?
- What are the solutions moving forward?

AI explorations

In the past three months alone since the call for papers and contributions for this e-book was launched, AI has been the main topic for many conferences, publications, workshops and courses.

At AMEC's annual conference in Miami, participants discussed the uses and further potential applications of AI for PR measurement and evaluation while also considering the challenges the use of AI and generative AI pose to content creators, publishers and copyright holders. In an earlier webinar this year, the IPR members including members of the IPR measurement commission discussed their uses of AI. The CIPR in the meantime published a new report reviewing AI tools and their impact on PR practice. Numerous

agencies organized webinars and discussions, followed up by sustained social media posts about how to best use new tools and platforms: among them are UK -based Signal AI had a series of workshops and Christopher S. Penn launching his *The Woefully Incomplete Book of Generative AI* with a list of examples with an expiry date attached to them.

On the academic front, Ethan Mollik of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania has been sharing his experimentations with AI in the classroom and lessons learned, and Stephen King of Middlesex University Dubai started sharing his own explorations with AI via an autoethnographic podcast, The Incongruent.

At Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, we have embedded generative AI in our own teaching. In my classes in particular, we played with ChatGPT as an assistant storyteller and editor, and compared results with ChatGPT as the writer. We compared outputs from free and paid versions, in several languages, with different prompts. We noticed differences between linguistic outputs with English being much stronger. We also noticed that we preferred human told stories, especially if we wrote them. But more importantly, we realized the weight words carry and thus the difference the pre-loaded meanings of our instructions make. For instance, a "story" for ChatGPT is narrative (as perhaps it should be) and rather long form, contrary to many current associations of story and storytelling with bite-size content or friendly user-journeys… unless a number of characters is specified in which case, often, the narrative is lost.

We have also looked at ChatGPT as a research and strategy assistant exploring processes such as stakeholder mapping and analysis. The realizations here were also multifaceted: it skips the theory, the output makes sense, but it needs customizing. More importantly, it works for bigger organizations and institutions but not for niche communities. And when it comes to sources, tracing them and examining them, there are other, better solutions out there including "old-school" research.

Finally, we looked into text to image generation as a pretext to explore framing. To make the discussion more relevant we played with prompts like "PR person using AI for work". While we were aware that we free tools we were using, Craiyon.com and Hotpot.ai had limited datasets and specific renderings, we still did not expect the output: sexy-looking, robotic, apocalyptic, female-like characters. The speed with which the results were received, was matched with the speed of questions resulting from the exercise regarding embedded bias in datasets, our ability to recognize it and address it, and the responsibility and accountability that comes with using these tools. This brought us to analyze and discuss other studies exploring AI bias like Nicoletti's and Bass's *Humans are biased. Generative AI is worse* (2023) and revisit Cathy O'Neil's *Weapons of Math Destruction* (2017).

And yet, perhaps more puzzling to us, were the associations with PR itself – some of which we could attribute to historically perpetuated stereotypes and misunderstandings such as: more women work in PR hence PR person is female looking; PR has been portrayed to serving organizational interests, AI is a serving – hence robot; also robots have often taken female form (see Siri, Alexa and Sophia), hence robotic women and perhaps sexy … and yet, why apocalyptic or zombie-like?

Perhaps similar to my and my students' experiences, your past months have also been also filled with similar explorations, and you have found yourself caught between excitement and dread. Which is why this book is so timely and so needed: because it does both and neither. In bringing together a diverse group of authors, both geographically and professionally – the authors are PR/Comms professionals, educators, academics, former and current students this book includes research, reflections, summaries and first-hand accounts of experiences with AI providing you with a generous view in the current practices and the common emerging questions and to dos.

This book goes beyond the buzz

Firstly, a clarification of terms is needed, and *Rene Seidenglanz* and *Melanie Baier* define and differentiate between all terms we together refer to as AI in their chapter discussing the current impact of AI on PR and emerging opportunities. The argue that an adjustment of PR/Comms tasks and roles is possible as a results collaboration with AI tools including monitoring and trend identification, however for that to happen “minimum level of "process, data and AI literacy” is needed.

Later in the book, similar points are made by *Hemant Gaule* in this discussion of integrating AI into Communications Curricula. Beyond discussing conditions necessary for PR adoption, Gaule also tests and evaluates a series of current applications rating their utility, ease of use and output accuracy proposing as a result a framework for building AI education proceeding then to discuss India’s case more specifically. His conclusion is that “In the near future, successful reputation management will largely depend on efficient and responsible use of AI tools”.

Thomas Stoeckle looks to the past to make sense of the present and foreseeable future, arguing that a “discussion over Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations and Communications is essentially a discussion over interest and purpose, over society and the common good”. He argues that it is not only AI in PR that we ought to be discussing, but also PR in AI. Therefore, he calls for a change in approach and ideology from linear *if then* to reflective *what if,* allowing critical reflection enabling practitioners to consider their social impact and not only their economic impact and thus move away from current linear, progressive models of PR success.

Clea Bourne goes deeper into “highlighting a different but vital relationship between the PR profession and AI, one in which PR professionals – acting as AI cheerleaders – are deeply implicated in generating AI hype”. Meanwhile, “the PR profession’s response to AI is evolving, shaped primarily by professional uncertainty about PR jobs, professional legitimacy and status, all of which are threatened by AI and automation.” She makes a similar argument as Stoeckle, that PR practice considers longer-term social impact of its promotion and use of AI, pursuing and responding to “an ethical imperative to do more than call for its own seat at the table; it must also work to create seats for others – to give voice to others – by also advancing the participation of marginalized communities in technology design”.

Tsvetelina Dobreva’s article revisits her Master’s thesis at Quadriga University of Applied Sciences. In aiming to identify whether PR/Comms people were capable of detecting AI generated short text from human generated texts, she ran both an experiment and a focus group. Her findings showed that, in general, humans struggle to make a difference between human and AI generated text with level of education or experience with writing not making any difference either. Dobreva’s study reflects Virmani and Gregory’s (2021) findings and Bourne’s observations regarding PR/Comms practitioners’ enthusiasm and positive attitude towards AI.

This enthusiasm is also emergent from *Christina Rettig* and *Thomas Mickeleit’s* focus group with German PR/Comms practitioners. In discussing the role of PR/Comms in the implementation of AI, the respondents “noted that while their departments carry the responsibility of facilitating this profound transformation, they often trail behind when it comes to their own digital evolution”. In this sense, progress compared to the digital competences reported in 2021 in the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass et al., 2021) seems to be have stalled. The author’s conclusion is similar with that expressed by Seidenglanz and Baier earlier in the book:

> There is no fast track when it comes to the implementation of AI in communications. Organizations have not yet reached a certain maturity with respect to CommTech may encounter significant challenges when it comes to implementing AI. Considering the accelerating pace of the technological evolution, it is not sufficient to merely implement new AI tools. Rather, communications professionals must delve deeply into the topic, truly understand the intricacies, and engage in continuous learning and adaptation to fully leverage the potential (Rettig & Mickeleit, 2023).

This, of course, has implications beyond the PR/Comms department, affecting company IT policies and data concerns, learning and sharing and, last but not least, employee readiness.

Employee readiness is also at the core of *Monique Zytnik* and *Matthew Lequick's* chapter *Getting colleagues comfortable with AI: A human-centered approach to technology in organizations.* Approached from an internal communications perspective, their chapter discusses technology adoption and the (at times, huge) discrepancies they noticed in practice (such as *still!* printing out PowerPoint presentations to make edits on paper) and proposes a framework to supporting an adoption campaign. In doing so, they provide useful tips to address fear of technology and address the thornier questions of ethical use, laws and regulation.

Also, a very hands-on approach is seen in *Franzika Mueller-Rech's* chapter. An elected state representative in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Mueller-Rech discusses the behind the scenes of daily political work, describes her and her team's explorations with AI and shares her own findings and reflections. In doing so she points to the challenges posed by closed IT systems and funding for technological assistants, to both experimenting and legislating with and about technology including AI.

Maintaining the hands-on approach, *Antony Cousins'* chapter provides a series of examples and case studies highlighting how automated narrative analysis and content classification look like, focusing on an area in great need of development in PR/Comms: listening. Such approaches, he argues, might work for organizations as early reputational warning systems. However, "human oversight and insight are essential, especially to ensure validity and trustworthiness of data sources used in the analysis".

While the entire book is meant as a reflection on AI's impact on PR and for PR, the final two chapters are specifically dedicated to discussing AI's future impact on the profession and on PR education.

Rene Seidenglanz and *Melanie Baier* thus return with a comprehensive chapter reviewing the ethical challenges, forecasting both implications and consequences for the tasks and role of communicators. Beyond increased responsibility and accountability, perhaps the most worrying development, would be an increase and continuous demand of customized outputs, without consideration of the informational pressure and limited processing (time, attention) capacities of humans or appreciation for the insight and specialist counsel of a PR/Comms trained practitioner. This could either lead to humans rejecting technologies completely – Evgeny Morozov was speaking of digital renegades in 2016 already, and Adi (2019) pointed to similar potential withdrawal effects to increased demands on transparency and information sharing in PR via all channels including social media – or to AI systems generating messages that are responded to by other AIs.

Finally, *Marina Vujnovic, Lukasz Swiatek, Dean Kruckeberg, and Chris Galloway,* make a call for a return to a higher education system that is critical of "social phenomena, processes, actions, and actors" focusing less on the use of the tools and more on their interrogation in larger socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Approaching “the wicked” AI with humble critique

Undoubtedly, there is enthusiasm and curiosity about AI in the PR world but there is also fear – of not knowing what it does, how technology works and whether it will truly be able to replace humans. This mix is clear both in this book as well as in many of the other publications and pieces of research released in recent years.

While the concerns are clear - ethics, responsibility, accountability, transparency, competence, and social impact – the solutions to them require systemic changes and long-term approaches.

Responding to AI as a wicked problem, complex and with many known and unknown unknowns, requires a reorientation of the PR/Comms profession’s focus:

- from servant of organizations and their interests to stakeholder facilitator,
- from speaker on behalf of organizations to listener
- from short-term measurement to long-term evaluation
- from organizational benefit to social impact and social value.

This also requires a mindset shift surrounding PR/communicators as Thomas Stoeckle and I (2023) argue in a recent book chapter on 'responsible persuasion', a realization that persuasive organized communication comes with responsibility and long-term effects and with it, embracing a role that allows to doubt, question and query rather than merely promote and sing praises.

This requires changing the current vocational focus of PR education away from “how to” to more reflective practice and critical thinking. This in turn, requires more research and analysis, and a “what if” approach rather than an “if, then” as Thomas Stoeckle points out. This also requires teaching persuasion literacies to non-communicators, creating spaces for deliberation and debate.

Generative AI might be the latest buzz, but AI is not new, nor are PR/Comms dilemmas. However, there is a renewed opportunity for PR/Comms to consider their impact and with it their legacy. The choices practitioners make today, are the history that we’ll be speaking of tomorrow.

Disclaimer

No AI has been used in writing this chapter – neither as a helper to brainstorm ideas, nor to help summarize texts or to rephrase and refine writing. The temptation was there but the need did not emerge, the editorial process providing the author plenty of insight and food for thought to require neither of those.

Biography

Dr. Ana Adi

Dr Ana Adi (www.anaadi.net) is a Professor of Public Relations and Corporate Communications at Quadriga University of Applied Sciences in Berlin, the chair of the Digital Communication Awards, and the host of the Women in PR podcast (on SoundCloud, iTunes and more). Dr Adi's research focuses on identifying solutions for the professionalization and futureproofing of PR/Comms including formulating their social impact and social value.

She also speaks about insight, measurement and evaluation in and for PR/Comms, and storytelling. Originally from Romania, Dr Adi obtained her doctorate from the University of the West of Scotland (UK). Prior to moving to Berlin, Dr Adi has lived, studied and worked in the USA, UK, Belgium, Thailand and Bahrain.

Dr Adi is the Vice-Chair of PRCA's University Advisory Group and a member of the Commission for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication at the Institute for Public Relations.

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The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Professional Field of Public Relations/Communications Management: Recent developments and opportunities

René Seidenglanz and Melanie Baier

The rapid development of artificial intelligence will have an enormous impact on various industries and professional fields. In the field of PR/communications management, too, there are numerous challenges and changes resulting from the use of AI, most recently from tools such as ChatGPT.

The study of the phenomenon is just beginning. This is particularly true for the field of PR/communications management. This article therefore aims to summarize the effects of AI and similar phenomena on PR/communications management, to discuss some emerging innovations and associated new tasks and roles in the PR/communications function. But first, it is essential to clarify what “AI” means.

Artificial intelligence, digitalization, automation - a clarification of terms

The term "artificial intelligence" (AI) is currently booming again. It is also being discussed intensively in the field of PR/communications management (Banholzer et al., 2023; Jahn, 2023; Kirf et al., 2020; Zerfaß & Brockhaus, 2023). However, the term is often used in an undifferentiated or vague manner, not only colloquially but also in technical articles. A clarification of the term “AI” is therefore helpful understanding what “AI” is and can(not) do.

A key characteristic of AI applications is that they are only developed for a specific, specifically described task and cannot solve another task ad hoc. This is also expressed in the definition of Kaplan & Haenlein (2019), who define AI "as a **system's ability to** correctly interpret external data, to **learn** from such data, and to use those learnings to achieve **specific goals** and tasks through flexible **adaptation**." In addition to the specific

task or goal, AI applications are thus further defined by the fact that they operate autonomously, i.e., pursue task resolution without permanent instruction from humans, and are adaptive, i.e., can improve the outcome by learning from experience/new data. At the core of every AI application are algorithms, which can vary in complexity, and in which parameters are stored via whose iterative adjustment the algorithm is trained and gradually arrives at better and better results. A well-known way of evaluating such a result in everyday life and thus contributing to the optimization of the algorithm is the "thumbs up / thumbs down" button in the response output of the AI application ChatGPT.

Even if AI applications are increasingly capable of taking contextual information into account in their computation, it remains, at least for the time being, the preserve of humans to be genuinely creative[1] , to be able to (quickly) transfer solution approaches to other contexts and, for example, to improvise successfully using heuristics.

AI applications as autonomous and adaptive systems with a specific objective are therefore only cognitively intelligent regarding this specific objective. Aside to AI applications that aim to improve the performance of a specific target variable ("supervised learning"), there are pattern-searching procedures that do not pursue result optimization, but rather make use of the availability of large amounts of data. Here, algorithms of varying complexity can be used to investigate patterns or structures autonomously and adaptively in data that are not immediately obvious to humans ("unsupervised learning"). With this explorative approach, hypotheses can first be formulated, which can then be tested in further investigations. For example, data from target groups can be examined regarding different factors (age, media use, level of education, etc.), in that the algorithm iteratively searches for the smallest distance between all feature values. Clusters reveal in which factors people are similar, so that target groups can be identified that may not be immediately intuitive.

In the debate about the application potential of AI in PR, it is worth taking a close look at whether the contributions really describe AI applications or are not rather used as a collective term for different forms of processing digitally available data or information. For example, data analyses can be AI-based if they are backed by algorithms that operate autonomously and adaptively, as is the case with stakeholder segmentation mentioned

[1] AI applications can be creative insofar as they recombine existing data on which the training of models is based. Genuinely new ideas remain the preserve of humans for the time being. Originality and excellence require human creativity (Jahn, 2023).

above. Of course, a KPI report based on internal data, such as is carried out in classic PR controlling, is miles away from AI.

The same distinction must be made for automated tasks. Process automation, such as that performed by software robots, can be very simple if they execute pre-defined processes - defined by humans - that are highly repetitive and rule-based. For example, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in a non-AI-based execution can be used to automate the maintenance of media databases and distribution lists.

However, RPA can also be based on complex algorithms for speech recognition and processing ("Natural Language Processing" (NLP)). Chatbots are another simple example: While rule-based chatbots are based on simple, predefined "if-then" rules, where the chatbot scans queries for keywords that are given defined answer sentences (often implemented as clickable question buttons in customer service), chatbots are AI-based when they are increasingly capable of correcting linguistic inaccuracies in the query, successively expanding the context (vocabulary) and providing increasingly accurate and individualized answers (see ChatGPT).

In summary, both data analyses and process automations initially stand on their own and can be sensibly carried out without AI. If autonomous and adaptive algorithms are also used in the data analysis process or in process execution, we speak of AI applications that address a specific problem. The problem can be to optimize a defined target value (supervised learning: "correctly assign unknown images to categories in the media database") or to recognize patterns and relationships in data (unsupervised learning: "which features can be used to group unknown images into categories"). It is immediately apparent that AI applications require a digital (data) infrastructure.

It is surprising that in the few contributions on AI and PR, it is precisely the core phenomenon described that often remains vague. Banholzer et al. (2023) for example, explicitly state that the definition of the technologies currently used in corporate communications and their labeling as automation or AI [is] sufficiently vague. Other papers related to communications, for example, Bünte & Wecke (2022), Gentsch (2018) or Lalić et al. (2020), subsume a whole range of processes, individual technologies, and tools up to and including digital transformation under the term AI. Banholzer et al. (2023, p. 236 f.) refrain from giving an exact definition of AI in their article, but then limit themselves in the following to AI applications from the field of pattern search ("unsupervised learning"). Zerfaß and Brockhaus (2023) completely omit the topic of AI from their discussion of the digital transformation of communications departments. Kirf et al. (2020) on the other hand mention the term AI but resume themselves to that.

In view of the changed roles and tasks that communicators are facing or are already facing we argue that a basic knowledge of AI is indispensable. A clear definition of AI would help identify the PR tasks that could be associated with new roles. In addition, the use of (AI-

based) data analyses and process automations must first be analyzed to identify whether and in what way they have a strategically relevant lever on processes and products of corporate communications/PR. At least in the specialist literature on communications management, strategic considerations on the targeted use of AI applications are currently still lacking; the seemingly arbitrary selection of tools, processes, and applications in some parts of the literature may be symptomatic of this. In this respect, too, a minimum level of "AI literacy" can be helpful in assessing what (AI-based) data analyses and process automations can achieve in a specific organizational context.

Keeping this in mind, we can therefore conclude that AI is immensely driving and accelerating the automation of processes as well as data analyses. So, if in the following we are talking about effects of "AI" for PR, then we speak about effects that have already been observed under the sign of previous data analysis and automation, but by means of AI applications will be raised to another level, and can be implemented at an even higher speed.

Major innovations in the professional field of PR

Automation of tasks (publications)

Media data management, publications of various kinds (text creation, image selection and editing, moving image production), including (standard) communications with stakeholders (support, responses) - i.e., repetitive and time-consuming activities - can be automated, which leads to an increase in efficiency (Feldmann, 2022).

When standard processes are automated, for example by Robotic Process Automation (RPA)[2], the need for humans to execute support processes in communication will decrease significantly. At the same time, new tasks will arise because, for example, process quality must be ensured so that automation can run without errors.

Automation also allows available personnel to focus on more strategic tasks as well as individual communication tasks that still require judgment, creativity, and interpersonal skills.

[2] RPA is a software program that can be used to program (software) robots. Robots are able to carry out entire business processes or individual process steps independently and automatically. The robot interacts with the systems or applications involved in the process and mimics human user interaction in the process (Langmann & Turi, 2020, p. 5).

Analysis of data and understanding of target groups

Using algorithms and machine learning, large amounts of data can be analyzed, and important insights can be gained. Traditionally, analyzing large amounts of data has been time-consuming and resource intensive. Due to increased computing capacity, the availability of multiple data sources, and new analytical methods, data can be collected and analyzed in real time, and faster decisions can be made based on that data. This enables not only a reaction to what is happening in the corporate environment, but also proactive management of current developments, trends, or crises. Targeted data analyses contribute to increased agility and effectiveness of PR work. Large volumes of data can, for example, be analyzed and coordinated in a newsroom as a central exchange platform (Banholzer et al., 2023).

Specific, selected use cases[3]:

Target groups/stakeholder analysis

By using AI, a more detailed and accurate understanding of target groups can be gained. AI-powered tools can collect, analyze large amounts of data that comes from a variety of sources, including social media, online forums, surveys, or customer databases - including demographic information, preferences, behavior patterns, and past interactions. This makes it possible to identify patterns and trends to better understand which messages and approaches might be appropriate for specific audiences. Similarly, stakeholder groups can be more efficiently divided into segments. These segments can be formed according to criteria such as age, gender, location, interests, or behaviors.

Generate personalized messages for stakeholders

By analyzing data, patterns can be obtained regarding stakeholder behavior, interests, and preferences.

- *Content adaptation*: Accordingly, AI applications can be used to adapt content (texts, images, videos) to these interests and preferences (Panda et al., 2019).

[3] In the Public Relations (PR) literature, there has been a discussion about various applications of AI. However, as of now, there's no broad, organized review of these use cases, such as how AI can be used in core and supporting processes of PR or corporate communications, or how it can be applied to diverse PR target groups. There are existing structured strategies for using AI in areas like marketing or human resources management, and these could potentially benefit the field of PR as well.

- *Real-time communication*: AI applications can foreseeably interact with stakeholders in real time and deliver personalized messages. This can be done, for example, in AI-based chatbot systems, where individualized answers or information are provided based on the input and behavior of the stakeholders.

However, the further development of the importance of personalized communication /individualized messages is likely to be interesting overall. We hypothesize that the expectation of stakeholders to receive individualized responses will increase with the increasing use of technical possibilities. Following this hypothesis, it is also possible that the expectation exceeds the actual performance of AI or the expectation for actual individuality (i.e., human responses) is reinforced. It must also be questioned how stakeholders in general will react if they are "flooded" with AI-generated "individualized" messages.

It is presumably easier for an AI system (compared to humans) to ensure consistency in the statement and freedom from contradiction for countless individualized messages/answers. At the same time, however, the question arises as to whether this is actually feasible with the expected mass of individualized responses - or whether discrepancies are produced that could become problematic. The challenge, then, is to strike a balance between automated responses and the use of human empathy to appropriately manage critical situations and build trust.

Trend detection through AI

Algorithms can also assist in identifying trends and patterns. By analyzing large amounts of data, AI-powered tools can identify emerging issues or detect changing opinions and sentiments among the public.

Sharpen/adjust communication strategy

With the help of deeper insights into the expectations and concerns of stakeholders as well as changes and trends, communication strategy can be continuously aligned and adjusted if necessary (e.g., Banholzer et al., 2023).

Faster communication in standard situations

In the age of social media and real-time feedback, reputation management and crisis communications are becoming increasingly important for companies. Here, AI applications can play an important role by monitoring a company's reputation in real time and analyzing feedback. Chatbots might in the future generate automated responses to complaints or negative comments. This is especially true for standard situations. AI applications can help to identify potential threats in social media at an early stage and thus support the necessary communication space monitoring (Kirf et al., 2020).

With all these innovations, current AI systems continue to require human interpretation and evaluation in data analysis and stakeholder understanding. Furthermore, control over communication and situationally appropriate action must be performed by skilled humans.

Adjustment of tasks, roles and competencies

The professional profile of PR professionals is changing massively under the aforementioned developments. Repetitive and standardizable tasks are vanishing (e.g., press releases, posts, distribution management, answering general questions), while new tasks are being added, resulting from process automation, data analyses, and AI applications. Hoewner (2017), for example, sees new tasks in analytics, data storytelling, and artificial intelligence in design, augmented reality, virtual reality, and traffic management in text production. Changing tasks and requirements can be grouped as follows:

Collaboration and interaction with AI applications

To use AI applications effectively, PR professionals should be able to fundamentally understand AI tools and technologies. This requires basic knowledge and thus literacies about how they work, how they can be used efficiently and how to recognize their capabilities and limitations.

A concrete (and simple) example is the so-called "prompt engineering" (in the narrow sense, this means only "more intelligent questions" to existing data sets). Formulating effective prompts that generate the appropriate message about the intended target group through appropriate tonality and good verbalization will become an essential skill in PR as well (MikeWorldWide, 2023). It is important to develop an understanding of how AI systems work and to integrate them into PR strategies.

Monitoring and optimization of AI applications

PR managers need to monitor the AI applications in use, evaluate their performance, and adjust as necessary to ensure that the content generated meets quality standards and the corporate message. AI applications can be prone to generating biased or inappropriate responses, so careful monitoring and adjustment is required. On the other hand, PR managers must ensure that the use of AI technologies meets ethical standards and adheres to privacy regulations (Seidenglanz & Baier, 2023).

Despite automation, it remains important to continuously ensure that publication meets desired quality standards and appropriately conveys the corporate message. Especially results from AI applications, which are assigned to the high-risk class according to the AI

Regulation[4], can ultimately only serve PR/corporate communications as a supporting decision-making tool; the ultimate control authority should lie with PR managers.

It becomes immediately clear at this point that new competencies are required to assess AI-generated results.

Analysis and interpretation of data

(AI-based) Data analytics make it possible to gain deeper insights into target groups, develop personalized communication strategies, and measure the effectiveness of campaigns. However, the interpretation of data analyses remains of great importance to ensure the strategic alignment of PR work. Conversely, dealing with ever more extensive data material and a more complex mapping of the environment requires a more complex understanding of interrelationships and effects. In addition, it is highly relevant for communicators to translate analyses into "data storytelling" in a way that is appropriate for the target group.

Resulting tasks and roles

The new and changed tasks require an adaptation of skills and competencies. Thus, even if not yet widely used, some roles can be outlined for RPA in corporate communications/PR, as they have already been added in other professions. Petersen & Schröder (2020) see the "process analyst" within the function (of PR), who defines the processes and activities to be automated from the specialist perspective. For this purpose, this person should have extensive process knowledge and experience. An "RPA Developer" is responsible for developing the RPA programs, implementing the processes specified by the analyst. If the process and technology affinity is lacking in the business department (of PR), these tasks can also be taken over by the IT department. Finally, tasks relating to the coordination and responsibility of RPA programs should lie in the business departments ("RPA Program Owner", "Leader"). The role of coordinating data analysis and specialist departments goes in a similar direction. "PR Analytics Partners" could act as an

[4] As part of its digital strategy, the EU wants to regulate artificial intelligence (AI) to create better conditions for the development and use of this innovative technology. It recommends that AI systems, which can be used in various applications, be analyzed and classified according to the risk they pose to users. The different levels of risk are subject to different levels of regulation. Once adopted, these will be the world's first legal regulations for AI (European Parliament, 2023). Regardless of the risk level, the AI Regulation (Article 52) provides transparency requirements for AI systems that interact with natural persons (Liebl & Klein, 2023).

interface between a specialized data analytics unit and PR / corporate communications; the role involves translating requirements from PR into data analytics and vice versa.

Concluding remarks

As outlined here by selected new roles, it becomes immediately clear that a minimum level of "process, data and AI literacy" will be necessary in all areas of PR to deal with the requirements of the future. Regardless of whether AI applications are purchased from external providers, companies build up their own data and AI competence via interdisciplinary teams, or internal PR competence is built up, it is essential that communicators can enter into an informed exchange with data and IT experts in order to be able to communicate their PR-related objectives and requirements on the one hand, and to be able to interpret data and results from AI applications on the other. Data and AI literacy in various forms and roles will thus be indispensable for PR.

Disclaimer

This article contains artificial intelligence in translating the original German article into English using DeepL. The translation provided by DeepL was double-checked by the authors to correct selected wordings and paraphrases.

Biography

Prof. Dr. René Seidenglanz is President of Quadriga University of Applied Sciences Berlin and in this position responsible for strategic guidelines and university development. He also holds a professorship in communication science at the university. The graduate communication scientist and psychologist has been working in science and education for many years. Between 2003 and 2008 he taught at the University of Leipzig in the field of PR/communication management. He was then Director of Studies at the German Press Academy and coordinated the development of the Quadriga University in Berlin. When it was founded in 2009, Seidenglanz was appointed Vice President. On January 1, 2020, he succeeded Prof. Peter Voß as President.

Dr Melanie Baier is Senior Manager Analytics & Innovation and lecturer in Data Science and Economics. She studied economics at the TU Dresden, where she also received her doctorate. Her research interest is in particular new data analysis methods for economic and business applications. In addition to her teaching activities, Dr. Baier worked for several years in the field of applied innovation research and product development as part of strategic innovation projects.

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If then, or What if? What the history of PR (and of 'persuasion technology') can teach us about the future role of AI in PR

Thomas Stoeckle

The discussion over Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations and Communications is essentially a discussion over interest and purpose, over society and the common good. Critical observers argue that PR's effect on society needs more attention, in particular the growing impact of digitization, algorithmic technologies and AI (Bourne & Edwards, 2021). How do we examine and define? Who gets to define? How do we maintain or achieve an agreed purpose (assuming an agreement on purpose is possible)?

In her call for papers, Ana Adi suggested a number of questions to address the topic:

- How are PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators responding to the AI challenge?
- How are PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators including it into their work, including insight, measurement and evaluation?
- What are the concerns and predictions that PR/Comms practitioners, academics and educators raise when it comes to use and abuse or AI in PR?
- What are the solutions moving forward?

Rather than contribute to the practical discourse around the application of AI in PR/Comms (where necessity and acceptance of said application are framed as an unquestionable given), this essay takes a step back and critically assesses the present and potential future of AI in PR. It starts from the assumption that, as modern PR has been significantly shaped by neoliberal market economics since the 1930s (Demetrious, 2022), neoliberal market economics are now significantly (re)shaped by AI, strongly supported by a cheerleading PR profession (Bourne, 2019). Thus, the respective impact of PR and AI needs to be assessed against the backdrop of free market economics. The history of how we got here will inform our understanding of the present and subsequent decision-making. Therefore, to frame the argument, this chapter takes a historical view both of

- PR (focusing on its origins in the early 20th century, and in particular the work and writing of Edward Bernays), and of
- the use of technology for persuasion (especially in Silicon Valley, the cradle and beating heart of the 'digital revolution' in the US since the 1960s).

The prevalent PR and AI mindsets stem from the same epistemological source, the same paradigm, the same understanding of, and thinking about the world. This means that PR operates within an ideology that it helps create and maintain: “ideology as a mental framework that functions through Public Relations as the corporate voice to produce a specific set of values, beliefs, and attitude” (Logan, 2014, p. 667). Tying together the history of PR, “persuasive technology” (Fogg, 2003) and the discussion around AI in PR (at least in democratic societies with free market economics) is an ideology that manifests as a modernist, stimulus-response model of mechanistic linear media effects, and an engineering mindset of societal evolution and improvement. It is also, inevitably, a very male mindset (Bourne, 2019; Crawford, 2021; Curry Jansen, 2022; Demetrious, 2022).

PR as AI’s neoliberal cheerleaders

The same ideology of “optimism and futurity” (Bourne, 2019) informs an understanding that PR is shaped by a market-based society, as well as shaping it (Demetrious, 2022). In this thinking, following Grunig’s assertion that “Public Relations must be empowered through representation in the dominant coalition or from having access to these powerful members of the organization” (Grunig, 2006, p. 160), the future of PR as we know it is tied to a market-based, neoliberal concept of economics and society of growth and innovation, with AI as an organic part of the process.

However, rather than being *AI cheerleaders*, it should be incumbent both on academia, and practice, to reflect critically on AI’s impact on PR, and vice versa (Bourne, 2019). PR’s professional bodies need to lead and frame the discourse and to a certain extent this is happening, however the focus again is mostly on realising the benefits, rather than considering and mitigating the costs (Swiatek & Galloway, 2023). While systematically biased algorithms, entrenching lack of diversity and racial bias are being critically discussed (Crawford, 2021; Noble, 2018; O'Neil, 2016), from a PR perspective, concerns about AI focus either on abuse and bad actors, or on commercial implications, and not on what might be regarded as a paradigmatic misdirection (Bourne, 2019). To understand this misdirection, it helps to take a look at the beginning of PR as a social science (Bernays, 1923), and the drivers of innovation since then.

Postman’s warning

In his 1985 critique of consumerist and mass media entertainment society, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, the media scholar Neil Postman argued that between two dark visions for liberal democracy – Orwell’s *1984* nightmare of totalitarian control, and

Huxley's alternative of suppression through entertainment and distraction in *Brave New World*, the latter would prove more prescient.

Postman died in 2003, therefore it is speculative to consider what his view of today's world of Instagram and TikTok, of the Metaverse, ChatGPT and generative artificial intelligence would be. In any case, his view of an Orwellian world where "culture becomes a prison", versus a Huxleyan one were "culture becomes a burlesque" (Postman, 2005, p. 155) seems too simple, too black and white today. Rather, the modern social media sphere, with apps and platforms competing with each other through attention capturing algorithms, appears like a media technology-enabled 'burlesque prison' where our base instincts are being catered to, in a way that – as in the Eagles' *Hotel California*, "we are all just prisoners here of our own device" and "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave".

Learning from the history of PR

If Aldous Huxley and George Orwell captured public imagination for their seemingly conflicting dystopian notions of a suppressed society, it was Edward Bernays whose work from the 1910s profoundly impacted modern American society (and in its wake, the rest of the world). In 1928, four years prior to the publication of *Brave New World*, Bernays published *Propaganda*, where the 'father of Public Relations' laid out his vision for a modern society:

> "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. (...) in almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons — a trifling fraction of our hundred and twenty million — who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world." (Bernays, 1928, p. 9f.)

Bernays had a practical understanding of market economics where everybody seeks the best deal, however, since ascertaining all the information required for optimal decision-making at any point is beyond the capacity of an individual, "society consents to have its choice narrowed to ideas and objects brought to its attention through propaganda of all kinds. There is consequently a vast and continuous effort going on to capture our minds in the interest of some policy or commodity or idea" (p. 11).

As Curry Jansen and many others have comprehensively argued, 'father of PR' Edward Bernays's 'intelligent manipulation of the masses' and 'father of neoliberalism' Friedrich Hayek's (1944) belief in market economics converged in a powerful, self-reinforcing narrative from the beginnings of PR in the early 20th century (Curry Jansen, 2017, p. VI), continuing to this day.

Bernays was also the nephew of Sigmund Freud, and strongly influenced by contemporary insights from psychoanalysis and social psychology. By making conscious and unconscious drivers of behavior the core of his method and practice, Bernays laid the ground for 100+ years of science- and technology-led public persuasion: from the work of William James and Wilhelm Wundt in the 19th century, all the way to the manifold branches of behavioral sciences and their application today (Hallsworth, 2023).

Behaviorist conditioning 2.0

Some 75 years after Bernays's 'capture of minds', the psychologist B.J. Fogg coined the phrase captology, based on the acronym derived from "computers as persuasive technology". Fogg defines captology as the "design, research, and analysis of interactive computing products created for the purpose of changing people's attitudes or behaviors" (Fogg, 2003, p. 5).

Fogg is the founder and director of Stanford University's Behavior Design Lab (formerly Persuasive Technology Lab). He received his PhD in communication from Stanford in 1997 with a thesis on *Charismatic computers: creating more likable and persuasive interactive technologies by leveraging principles from social psychology*.

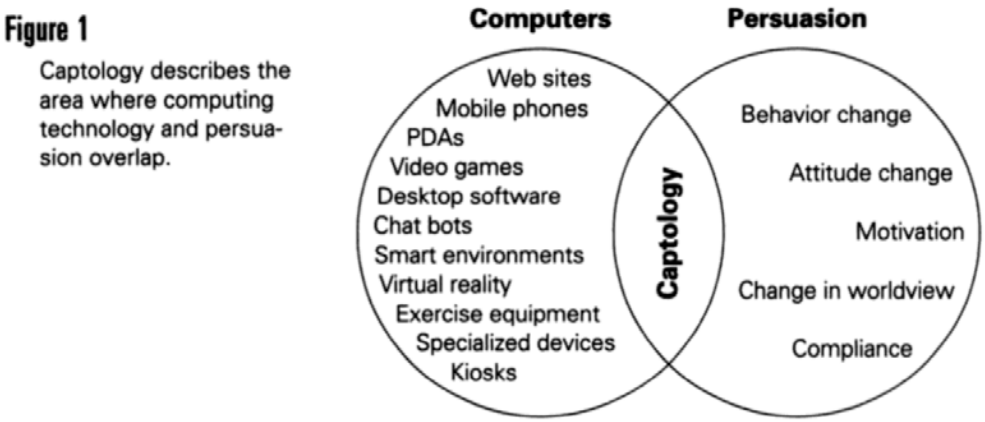
Persuasion through the leveraging of principles from social psychology: from ancient Greece and Aristotle's rhetoric, to present-day principles of marketing and public communication, the promise of making outcomes of human interaction more predictable – if need be through social engineering and control – is never far from the minds of those involved with the guidance of masses, be it as consumers, or as citizens, or as a polity.

Historian Jill Lepore's (2020) book *If Then. How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future* describes a company which in the 1960s aimed to solve societal problems and predict political outcomes through the collection and systematic processing of data:

"Decades before Facebook and Google and Cambridge Analytica and every app on your phone, Simulmatics' founders thought of it all: they had the idea that, if they could collect enough data about enough people and write enough good code, everything, one day, might be predicted—every human mind simulated and then directed by targeted messages as unerring as missiles."(Jill Lepore in The New Yorker, 27th July 2020).

The evident similarities between Simulmatics Corporation and Cambridge Analytica go beyond a hubristic and perhaps unethical approach and aspirations regarding social engineering: both companies ultimately failed and ended up discredited: Simulmatics overpromised and underdelivered, and after lucrative government (especially Pentagon) contracts were cancelled, the business went bankrupt in the 1970s (Lepore, 2020); in the case of Cambridge Analytica, overpromise, unethical data practices and illegal behavior exposed by investigative journalists combined to bring about the rapid demise of an organization that was said to have swayed both the Brexit and Trump votes in 2016 – although this is impossible to prove (Van Der Linden, 2023).

Figure 1. Captology as described by Fogg (2003, p. 5)



Despite these failures, the principle continues to appeal to marketers and communicators. Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL), the political consultancy behind Cambridge Analytica (which also went out of business in 2018), is worth mentioning in this context: its founder Nigel Oakes is infamous for a quote in a 1992 interview where he stated “We use the same techniques as Aristotle and Hitler. We appeal to people on an emotional level to get them to agree on a functional level” (cited in a Tatler article in 2018). In an interview with the Financial Times journalist Gillian Tett, Oakes made the point in a less controversial way, highlighting the combination of social sciences and creative communication (Tett, 2021, p. 144). Again, this echoes Bernays’s approach outlined already in the 1920s.

Determining or predicting outcomes?

From Bernays’s Torches of Freedom to today’s belief in the power of Big Data in marketing and public communication, from the Simulmatics Corporation to Cambridge Analytica, the

same principle holds: by profiling people through gathering data on them, then targeting them through selected media channels with tailored messages based on insights from those data profiles, organizations (at least in theory) can manage to influence their targets to a level where desired outcomes become predictable.

This is at the core of Shoshana Zuboff's critique of *Surveillance Capitalism* (2019): there is a drive toward more and more data extraction and analysis, toward personalization and customization of services offered to users of digital platforms, optimizing their time on apps and platforms through the capture of attention, making behavioral outcomes more predictable. AI expert and critic Kate Crawford makes a similar point, describing AI and the scraping of online content as an extractive industry of the 21st century without guardrails (Crawford, 2021).

This is also where the modernist narratives of PR and AI converge: in a vision where an "ideology of Cartesian dualism … where AI is narrowly understood as disembodied intelligence, removed from any relation to the material world" (Crawford, 2021, p. 7) meets a PR profession eager to play "a vital role in 'pump-priming' the market by drumming up excitement in the prospect of 'hidden treasures' waiting to be extracted through investment in AI companies" (Bourne, 2019, p. 118).

PR and AI: choices to be made

In a prescient essay about AI and public discourse in 2002 (reprinted with a new introduction in 2022), media and communication scholar Sue Curry Jansen highlighted the profound impacts of the digital revolution on individuals and society (Curry Jansen, 2022, p. 16).

In a recent essay, AI expert and critic Kate Crawford makes a similar argument, pointing to the social and political challenges of AI, especially around "power asymmetries and wealth inequality" (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2022, p. 15). As a social and political problem, PR's relationship with AI is not least a question of narrative(s): in the way AI affects PR, and in the way that PR is involved in public discourse concerning AI.

PR has a choice in how it contributes to such narratives, how it engages with the challenges and possibilities of AI. It can either continue to take AI for granted in its impact on the field, as well as on the organizations that PR serves, i.e. continue to support this digital revolution and its commercial interests, with subordinate ethical considerations. In this perspective, PR performs "the role of interpreter to publics of both the risks and the benefits of AI" (Swiatek & Galloway, 2023, p. 359). As with so many other public discourses, PR would set the agenda and frame the debate on behalf of organizational interests, with little or no responsibility for the debate itself.

Alternatively, it could join a growing band of critics and reflective voices who advocate for a different, more diverse and inclusive approach to AI, and of PR's role in realizing it, through contributions to social justice (Bourne & Edwards, 2021, p. 611). In this context, Crawford calls for "a deeper sociotechnical approach that can contend with the complex effect of AI on societies and ecologies" (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2022, p. 15).

However, that choice would come at a cost: given AI's projected economic impact (Swiatek & Galloway, 2023, p. 358), present incentive and reward structures of political economies are tuned to maximizing the economic gains (a recent Goldman Sachs study puts the potential at 7% of global GDP, or almost $7tn, over a ten year period), not to mitigating the societal and ecological risks that Crawford and others allude to.

The reality of those commercial pressures, combined with the fact that PR consultants are seen as corporate problem-solvers in cases of disruption (Bourne, 2019, p. 112) means that the balance remains tipped in favor of application, not reflection. For the time being, the discourse remains focused on AI and digital media's transformative, disruptive power as a driving force behind the 'fourth industrial revolution' (Swiatek & Galloway, 2023, p. 356)

Changing the narrative – from modern hubris and hype or postmodern cynicism, to metamodern humility

Recent discussions of the risks and opportunities of AI (not just in PR) are too often shaped by hype and hubris. AI is either leading to a catastrophic end of the world as we know it, or it will solve all our problems. Such black and white positioning is either optimistically modern, or pessimistically postmodern, and PR – like the Sophists in ancient Greece – can persuasively argue either side of a debate that is increasingly happening in (if not creating) a post-truth environment (Thompson, 2020).

Given PR's role in shaping public language and discourse (Bourne, 2019; Demetrious, 2022), we ought to consider how to move beyond modernist certainties and postmodern relativism, toward a "metamodern synthesis of responsible persuasion" (Adi & Stoeckle, 2023). Such a shift in worldview would also mean a shift in PR's stakeholder focus, toward a more inclusive purpose where society and the environment as a whole, rather than organization-centric stakeholders, are "at stake" (Roper & Hurst, 2019, p. 6).

In a 2016 paper, Willis suggested that PR should approach society's multi-faceted, intractable *wicked problems* (Rittel & Webber, 1973) with *humble intelligence* grounded in inquiry, listening, learning, collaboration and dialogue (Willis, 2016). This aligns with Jasanoff's concept of *technologies of humility* – institutional mechanisms such as citizen

participation in public policy, governance and regulation (Jasanoff, 2022), Josephson Storm's *humble knowledge* as a metamodern principle of human sciences (Josephson Storm, 2021), and Saville's *humble geography* (Saville, 2021), another plea for humility in making sense of the world. 'Curious humility' would thus seem to be a constructive mindset in PR's various grapples with AI, including a focus away from the primacy of commercial gain, and toward a more inclusive, stakeholder-minded digital commons (Huang & Siddarth, 2023).

Conclusion

The question of AI in PR and PR in AI is thus one of mindset and paradigm, of operational logic: applying linear (neoliberal) management principles to core PR tasks and AI support, from the use of chatbots to AI enabled communication planning, execution, measurement and evaluation, is an expression of a mechanistic *if then* worldview. It is grounded in ideology formed both by 'Cartesian dualism' and neoliberal market economics.

On the other hand, reflecting and representing complex stakeholder realities in a world of wicked challenges requires more of a *what if* logic (Roper & Hurst, 2019; Stoeckle & Adi, 2023), where the focus is less on the control of outcomes, and more on resilience, agility and flexibility required in dealing with uncertainty.

Choosing *what if* over *if then* requires an ideological shift, leading to a number of perspective shifts regarding PR's relationship with AI, including:

- giving more attention to critical reflection, and not taking application for granted – for example, by assessing social value from various societal perspectives and considering social justice before implementing technology (Bourne & Edwards, 2021); this requires
- focusing less on the impact on the profession or the economy, and more on societal impact, addressing "AI's programmed inequalities – towards race, gender and identities" (Bourne, 2019), for example through improved listening, planning, measurement and evaluation (Macnamara, 2023; Stoeckle & Adi, 2023);
- taking a holistic (and at the same time humble) view of humanity in a social environment, as opposed to oversimplified concepts of PR (linear impact of communication activities) and AI (simulation of cognition); this needs to start with education, and academy and practice share the responsibility to devise curricula and training schemes that address both organizational interests, and social justice in metamodern perspective, rather than prioritizing one over the other.

Knowing the history of both PR, and AI is a good starting point to build the understanding necessary to learn from the past and assess the available choices more consciously and critically.

Disclaimer

No AI tools have been used for the ideation or for the writing of this chapter.

Biography

Thomas Stoeckle is a post-graduate researcher (Ph.D.) at Bournemouth University's Faculty of Media and Communication, and a partner at communication agency Dot I/O Health. Originally from Germany, Thomas has lived and worked in London since 2000, pursuing a career in media intelligence and communication consulting, most recently at Lexis Nexis. He teaches public communication related topics at PR Academy UK, Bournemouth University UK, and Quadriga University of Applied Sciences in Berlin.

He is the founder and co-host of a podcast on data, marketing and communication, TheSmallDataForum (www.smalldataforum.com), Member of the Commission for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication at the Institute for Public Relations, Member of AMEC (the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication), and a Fellow of the Salzburg Global Seminar.

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AI Hype: Public Relations and AI's doomsday machine

Clea Bourne

By any measure, the branding and promotion of "AI" or artificial intelligence and automation technologies has been a triumph in twenty-first century market hype. AI's hype cycle entered a new phase in 2023 thanks to investor ardor driven by 'generative AI' products such as ChatGPT, adding trillions to the value of major stock markets in the first half of 2023 (Regnier, 2023). Meanwhile, the PR profession's response to AI is evolving, shaped primarily by professional uncertainty about PR jobs, professional legitimacy and status, all of which are threatened by AI and automation. A series of industry reports have focused on the PR profession's pressing need to enhance digital skills and expertise in AI and automation tools (See for example Adi, 2019; Bruce & Waddington, 2023; Valin, 2018; Virmani & Gregory, 2021). These are indeed valid concerns addressed in depth in my recent book, *Public Relations and the Digital* (Bourne, 2022), which focuses on digital platforms as the economic structures enabling the massive spread of AI and automation. Each chapter explores a different aspect of digital transformation driving change in the PR profession including the demand for new digital skills, digital media's 'need for speed', and managerial demands for greater efficiencies – as well as the looming threat that PR tasks could one day be outsourced to machines.

This chapter takes a different direction. I aim to broaden current professional debates by highlighting a different but vital relationship between the PR profession and AI, one in which PR professionals – acting as AI cheerleaders – are deeply implicated in generating AI hype. While contemporary AI includes a host of activities, I adopt the term 'AI and automation' to encompass a range of automated tools that are both simple and complex, and which follow instructions to perform specific tasks by algorithms and protocols. My discussion explores recent market studies research on disruption and hype cycles, before delving into the latest, somewhat disturbing phase in AI's hype cycle, in which end-of-the-world scenarios are invoked to stimulate a climate of fear around AI. The chapter concludes by exploring some ethical concerns with promoting AI and automation as humanity's inevitable future.

The PR industry has much to gain from promoting AI because of the sheer range of economic sectors currently profiting from AI and automation. The healthcare sector uses AI in wearable tech, facial recognition and other diagnostic tools designed to detect vital signs and physical wellness (Garcia et al., 2020). The financial sector uses AI to trade

securities, offer 'robo-advice' to investors, and track consumer data for insurance policies (FCA, 2019). The travel, leisure and retail sectors all use AI to take customer orders, redirect customer queries and respond to customer complaints (UneeQ, 2021). The defense sector has invested billions in AI-assisted surveillance, target and decoy technologies (Economist, 2019).

Evidence of PR's cheerleading role for AI were deftly illustrated by a November 2018 article penned by PR consultant and intermittent political adviser, Guto Hari (2018). He warned the PR industry that taking a reactive stance to AI amounted to standing in the way of progress. The correct way for the PR industry to approach AI, urged Hari, was with anticipation and excitement:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses little threat to our industry – but it provides plenty of opportunities, not least because it will wreak havoc in some sectors and bring mind-blowing breakthroughs in others. [...] As communicators, we have a responsibility to talk about AI in a positive way, to help ease the way for its assimilation into everyday life. Harnessing AI will allow us to focus on the more human aspects of jobs. Society needs to embrace machines, seeing them as friends, not foes (Hari, 2018).

Hari's 2018 comments identified a strategic role for PR in global AI discourses, contending that companies best able to capitalize on AI were 'the ones with communicators driving the debate'. Hari's observations about AI wreaking 'havoc' in some sectors, while bringing 'breakthroughs' in others, establishes a direct link between PR and the current phase of neoliberal capitalism, which venerates disruption and winner-take-all (Davies, 2014). From the PR industry's perspective, disruption guarantees PR advisors a place on corporate speed dials. This is an important consideration at a time when economic challenges are placing new pressures on the global PR industry (Sudhaman, 2023).

In this chapter, I focus on PR on behalf of AI as a form of discourse work (Pieczka, 2013), encompassing public affairs and political communication by government ministries and departments, political lobbying, corporate and market communication by global technology firms, investment houses and advisors, business-to-business communication by global management consultancies, as well as business-to-consumer communications by established tech companies and start-ups. As part of discourse work, PR, in its different forms, is expected to privilege certain voices over others in order to legitimize AI and automation technologies. However, unlike some of the discourses PR has been called on to legitimize in the past – for example, free trade, financialization[5], outsourcing or

[5] Financialization refers to increasing influence of finance and financial markets in relation to the rest of the economy, while more financial products form part of everyday life.

extractive technologies – naturalizing AI as a way of life has direct implications for society, for democracy, and for the future of PR itself (Bourne, 2019).

Silicon Valley, iCapitalism and 'disruption' discourses

The AI sector is symbolized by Silicon Valley; a term that has become shorthand for more than just a collection of technology businesses in California's San Francisco Bay Area. Rather, 'Silicon Valley' is an ethos shaping our cultural understanding of innovation, technology, and capitalism (Levina, 2017). Silicon Valley's quasi-religious blend of left-leaning counter culture, hyper-capitalist libertarianism and technological determinism has also been labelled 'iCapitalism'. This approach venerates 'disruption'[6], a highly destructive force which prevents old business patterns from repeating themselves (Duff, 2016; Levina, 2017).

From a PR perspective, disruption can also be seen as a discursive strategy which permeates and constructs Silicon Valley mythology, couched as it is in the language of consumer empowerment, user satisfaction, cost-cutting, and automated revolution (Levina, 2017). Disruption discourses are further embedded with a performative threat-value where the threat of disruption lies in the future. Since the future is by definition unknown, this requires companies to behave *as if* they are disrupted even when nothing is actually happening (Levina, 2017). This definition presses us to think about PR's role in AI's disruption discourses, and expressly in AI's current hype cycle.

Hype cycles and market narratives

Hype happens when a new or unfamiliar technology field is "heatedly discussed in public spaces, when these discussions draw investments in research and development into the area, and when these investments in turn allow the technology to develop into more concrete market trajectories" (Geiger & Gross, 2017, p.437). Analysts of hype cycles contend that hype is *necessary* for new technologies to attract enough attention, funding,

[6] The term 'disruption' is often associated with Joseph Schumpeter's 1942 concept of creative destruction, in which he theorized capitalist development as a form of economic change that cannot be stationary, requiring a process of constant mutation.

interest and allies to compete against other innovations (Geiger & Gross, 2017). The field of market studies has produced several studies on hype cycles where technologies are first evangelized, then vilified, in equal measures, before being absorbed into existing markets and practices. These include studies on digital health applications (Geiger & Gross, 2017), biotech therapies (Brown, 2003) and nanotechnologies (Simakova & Coenen, 2013).

The term 'hype' is often treated inaccurately as a synonym for PR and promotion. Yet markets are both symbolic and material spaces, so PR does play an important role in hype cycles. In the first place, new markets evolve through shared stories, narratives or discourses (Geiger & Gross, 2017). Then, as a technology matures, social, political or cultural issues have to be taken into account, which can complicate the technology's trajectory (Borup et al., 2006). PR may therefore be needed to further legitimize technology narratives, but also to employ "affective coloring and repeated circulation" as a powerful tool for stirring up excitement, anticipation, even fear – thus creating hype, and in turn helping to motivate and direct market investments (Geiger & Gross, 2017, p.449). As with any narrative, various market actors – including innovators, research committees, investors, consumers and regulators – are scripted into the plot and must perform their part if the story is to be successful. The most vociferous voices are most likely to have their narratives shared most widely.

Promoting AI as consumer empowerment

Hype cycles are at their most successful once consumers are brought onside. This is often achieved through market narratives of consumer sovereignty in which tech industry proponents promise a consumer-led revolution with technologies poised to liberate consumers from some retrograde process (Geiger, 2019). AI's consumer empowerment message is richly illustrated by the launch of DALL-E and ChatGPT, two well-hyped products developed by OpenAI, a San Francisco-based high-tech firm. Both products are built on GPT, OpenAI's large language model, now marketed under the category 'generative AI'. In this market category, machine learning guides the creation of content or, in some cases, creates content – e.g. images, text, audio – without (or with little) human intervention (Raustiala et al., 2019). DALL-E[7], first made worldwide news in January 2021, after being trained to generate images based on a text prompt to design an 'avocado chair' (Ramesh et al., 2021). While the images were rough around the edges, mainstream

[7] DALL-E is a portmanteau of artist Salvador Dali and Pixar's robot hero, WALL-E.

media such as the BBC, NBC, and Financial Times, lapped up the story (See Ehrenkranz, 2021; Wakefield, 2021; Venkataramakrishnan, 2021). The images were shared widely on social media, and consumers piled in to use the free version of DALL-E thus providing OpenAI with massively expanded training data. By 2023, OpenAI had posted far more sophisticated images on DALL-E's Instagram account, including one representing the text prompt 'The Hanging Gardens of Babylon in the middle of a city, in the style of Dali'. OpenAI's other product, ChatGPT, has yielded greater hype, and even greater controversy. What matters for PR is that OpenAI's training data has since been identified as flawed, biased and discriminatory; its GPT model has repeatedly been found to fabricate information, while outputs from ChatGPT and other large language models have led to litigation over plagiarism and copyright (Davis, 2023; Feldman, 2023).

Promoting AI's national competitiveness

While ChatGPT may have delivered the biggest spike in the current AI hype cycle, the consumer is not the only target of AI hype. The emerging AI economy is being aggressively naturalized as the common-sense way of life and a public good through persuasive doctrines enabled by PR. Unfettered support for 21st-century AI technologies goes right up the food chain, from multinational businesses to national and regional governments, all keen to compete in the AI 'space race'. Numerous vested interests include institutional investors, investment banks, tech companies, management consultancies and advisory firms, all of which have employed PR to campaign for a future shaped by AI. Many of these organizations have large, well-resourced communications teams, able to invest hundreds of millions in sustained AI thought leadership activity, including white papers, surveys and reports. For instance, McKinsey, the global consultancy, published research in 2023 claiming that generative AI alone could completely reverse the last decade of decline in global productivity growth (Chui et al., 2023).

Enter doomsday hype…

AI's hype cycle entered a new phase in mid-2023, raising further concerns for PR. After years of stirring up unabashed excitement about AI, the tech sector changed its narrative to a campaign of fear. Such doomsday hype is not unusual in the current era of neoliberal capitalism, where narratives of national competitiveness are just as likely to frighten as

they are to enthuse[8] (Davies, 2014, p.141). Yet it is worth examining how AI market developments led to this new doomsday phase. For many years, ultra-low interest rates drove global investors into risky, early stage tech investments. But interest rates began rising in large markets in 2021, even as some tech companies failed to meet investor expectations. According to market analysts, CB Insights, AI venture capital funding experienced a steep fall in the first quarter of 2023. In the wake of this decline, the tech industry published two open letters prophesying AI doom and destruction. The first letter, entitled '*Pause Giant AI Experiments',* published in March 2023 by the Future of Life Institute, called for the AI industry to step back from its "dangerous race"[9].

The second open letter published in May 2023 consisted of just one sentence: "Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war" (CAIS, 2023). In the weeks following the publication of both open letters, the US stock market had a resounding rally of tech stocks, with more than US$4 trillion added to the value of the NASDAQ 100, while the S&P 500 surged 159%. Doomsday hype is a classic inflater of market bubbles because of the "fear of missing out" — or in the case of AI – "FOBR, fear of being replaced". According to one market analyst, if investors think AI is going to take over all jobs, and take over the world, the only way to hedge that risk "is by owning the damn robots" (Regnier, 2023).

Conclusion: AI's future is not inevitable

One cannot attribute AI hype solely to PR activity, since many other actors play a vital role. Indeed, the rapid acceptance of AI and automation forms part of an expansionary global discourse backed by trillions in investment finance, and widespread support from private and public sector elites (Bourne, 2019). However, closer scrutiny of AI hype reveals a number of ethical issues which PR should not ignore. First, the most vociferous voices dominating AI narratives are those representing large language models and deep learning, with the greatest hype and attention dedicated to these specific AI functions. This has skewed attention, policy support, and investor funding *away* from the development of AI-related products and services designed for different purposes, while

[8] Indeed, as early as 2018, Alibaba founder, Jack Ma speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, declared that AI and robots would 'kill our jobs'. See also Judy Motion and Kay Weaver's (2005) study of PR fearmongering between pro- and anti-GM food groups.

[9] At the time of writing, the March Open Letter had amassed more than 33,000 signatures, while the May Open Letter was signed by more than 350 AI scientists and tech executives.

similarly marginalizing the work done by researchers aiming to understand AI's true impact on society, investigative work aiming to expose AI harms, and grassroots organizing and resistance against those immediate harms (Bender, 2023; Gebru, 2022).

Additionally, the PR profession cannot afford to ignore its role in generating AI hype because AI and automation are not 'neutral' technologies. The very origin of the term 'artificial intelligence' assumes a vision of 'intelligence' that is rooted in the racist notions of IQ and associated race science – ideas that continue to thrive in powerful corners of Silicon Valley (Bender, 2013). This is a deeply uncomfortable truth, and an unpopular one. But PR as a profession cannot claim to value voice, to represent publics, or to support social and democratic ideals if it chooses to retreat from the difficult truths that the AI industry has chosen to create and perpetuate. Nor should the PR profession regard AI and automation technologies as humanity's inevitable future. These technologies can and are being resisted in favor of a future that is more human-oriented.

A human-oriented AI future is one that envisions a new digital society that is not built on forms of social and political subjugation (Benjamin, 2019). PR's own vision of its AI future must therefore expand. For instance, currently, there are calls for PR to have a seat at the table in the technology design process (e.g. Valin & Gregory, 2020). To do so, PR must be astute enough to recognize the political power currently driving Big Tech, yet still be courageous enough to speak truth to power. But PR also has an ethical imperative to do more than call for its *own* seat at the table; it must also work to create seats for others – to give voice to others – by *also* advancing the participation of marginalized communities in technology design (Benjamin, 2019). McQuillan (2022) has set out a blueprint for how this might be achieved through the creation of people's AI councils that would be truly representative and genuinely transformative by focusing on social issues connected with AI.

So there is room for optimism in the face of Silicon Valley's doomsday hype. As Coldicutt (2022) points out, many digital worlds can and do co-exist, so we do not need to dismantle all harmful AI platforms first, before we build alternatives. That alternative digital world would be shaped by an ethics of digital care. For PR, such an ethics would move beyond corporate interests to societal ones, to envision a truly caring digital society that nurtures and grows spaces beyond the market, common spaces where people can act for each other (Coldicutt, 2022; McQuillan, 2022). Such a digital world will "not only generate profit but create better outcomes for everyone" (Coldicutt, 2022). Who in PR will stand-up and be counted for a future such as this?

Disclaimer

This piece was written without any AI assistance.

Biography

Dr Clea Bourne (https://www.linkedin.com/in/cleabourne1/) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, where she has directed the MA Promotional Media: Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing for more than a decade. Her broad research interests span market, media and cultural studies, notably how economies and market practices are hyped, legitimized and normalized. She is the author of *Trust, Power and Public Relations in Financial Markets* and *Public Relations and the Digital: Professional Discourse and Change.* Clea is also co-editor with Paul Gilbert, Max Haiven and Johnna Montgomerie of *The Entangled Legacies of Empire: Race, finance and inequality*. She serves on the editorial boards of *AI and Society, Economy and Society*, *Corporate Communications,* and *Northern Lights*

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Shedding light on the helper in the shadows

Tsvetelina Dobreva

The study "The helper in the shadows" aimed to showcase that AI text generators provide a good human-written-like texts which could be used to the advantage of PR and Communications professionals. Since ChatGPT's release in November 2022 and the viral coverage in the media, no one asks if machines are good text creators - everybody knows they are. So much for staying in the shadows - ChatGPT and other AI-based applications have been gaining popularity so much that servers cannot keep up, while curious users have been testing creativity and exploring the different possibilities that the tools can give them. "The helper in the shadows" explored the impact of automatic text generation software, based on the GPT-3 model, on Public Relations and their daily routine. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including a quantitative experiment that examined the recognition ability of media users on automatic and human-created texts and a follow-up focus group. The experiment presented participants with a questionnaire containing eight texts on four different topics: bias in recruiting, sustainability in corporate agendas, an earthquake, and a smartwatch product description. For each topic, there was one text created by AI-powered software based on the GPT-3 model and one text written by the author. The participants were recruited via an open call distributed to the author's own social media channels and word of mouth. 117 participants completed the study. From the study, participants that have identified themselves as PR professions were invited to join an online focus group that aimed to their perceptions of AI and its implications on their daily business. 6 practitioners attended.

The results of the study indicated following key findings:

- **Low recognition rate, hence good machine-created text outputs.** Humans struggle to tell apart the automatically created texts from human-written ones. Participants successfully identified the correct author in about 5 out of 8 texts tested. The study looked at the technology from the human perspective and explored potential factors that might influence recognition, as well as looked at the assessment methods used by the participants.
- **No correlation between recognition ability and education of participants.** The study hypothesized that one's ability to recognize an AI-generated text might be linked to their level of education, due to Western education being based in reading and writing. As this can be considered as training for text creation (Vercic

& Zerfass, 2017), higher education levels were expected to be positively correlated to higher recognition ability. However, the results, assessed with Spearman's correlation test showed no correlation between the level of education obtained and the recognition ability of the participants (r=.006, p=.948, N=117). Furthermore, participants whose jobs involved text writing did not perform significantly different from other participants.

- **Low adoption rates of text generative tools but positive attitude toward AI use in PR.** The focus group discussion indicated positive attitude towards the technology from the PR professionals and willingness to apply it in their daily business. The main reasons for the discussed willingness were the time- and money-saving potential that such automation enables. This study discusses the practical implications, positive and well as negative, of the adoption of such tools for the daily tasks of communicators and the PR profession overall.

Recognition

Starting with recognition, the results yield an average of 62,9% correct recognition of the author of the texts (AI or human). Although the study used a previous generation of natural language generator (NLG), the GPT 3 model, AI was able to provide good output on short texts that people struggled to tell apart from human written texts. Out of the 117 people who took part in the study, only eight recognized all texts correctly.

The study did not disclose any information about the number of artificially created texts. Literature suggests that this might have influenced the participants and could have activated some biases (Haenlein & Kaplain, 2019; Kreps, McCain & Brundage, 2020). These human biases were evident in the assessment commentary. One comment identified one of the automatically generated texts as human-written with certainty, adding the following: *"written by an uninspired marketeer - I read texts like these very often and know that they are written by people".* On the one hand, the comment indicated some criticism so it speaks for lack of quality in the AI-created text. On the other hand, the comment could be interpreted as a compliment to the machine, as the text was considered human-written. Furthermore, this can also suggest that machines are only as good as the training data they receive, and they can imitate human writing but cannot surpass it. What this means for PR professionals is that quality control to uphold and further build the reputation of the PR profession is more important than ever.

Another prejudice relates to the emotionality of texts. Some texts were particularly difficult to attribute to the correct author: about half of the respondents attributed them to a human writer while and the other half assumed they were AI-generated. The main argument related to the emotionality of the text. Generally, participants who perceived a given text

as emotional tended to assign it to a human writer and those who perceived it as not emotional, attributed it to an AI writer. The comments received suggest that when it comes to perceived emotions, humans can be very subjective and unreliable. What this could also suggest is that either humans are fundamentally wrong about their assumptions about AI text generator capabilities or that automatic text generators are indeed good at describing emotions.

Talking about biases displayed from the tools, it is suggested that NGLs can purposely use tactical language in delivering news so they are more positively framed rather than neutral (van der Sluis & Mellish, 2021). This argument supports the claim that software possesses some understanding or awareness of emotional language and can provide output accordingly. Opposing arguments relate to the lack of ability to describe some emotions, such as grief (Low & Vara, 2022). The suggestion from van der Sluis and Mellish (2021), as well as the discussion between Low and Vara (2020), indicate a potential weakness of the software that innately looks for a positive framing and a happy end, which makes it unsuitable for some applications. This might also be the reason why the earthquake texts pair enjoyed the highest recognition rates. This could also be linked to the typical American culture that tends to favor positive framing of messages and could support the claim that GPT-3 has an American accent (Johnson et al., 2022). All this is directly related to biases from the development phase. If we accept that the automatic text generators follow a certain narrative, then we need to develop other tools that would cover the full spectrum of human emotions. Alternatively, we must accept that NLGs might not be suitable to be used in crisis situations as the language adopted in such communication is very specific and often requires neutrality and a display of compassion for the involved parties (Coombs, 2010). This might also confirm the suggestion from Floridi and Chiriatti (2021) that professionals using such tools must develop the skills to brief the machines appropriately to optimize the given output. This also could be interpreted as a lack of understanding of the provided output which would go in line with the suggestion from DeCanio (2020) and Kulkarni, Shivanande and Kulkarni (2022), who claim that the software simply predicts the sequence of words when given a prompt.

Approaches to assessment

The quantitative research found that there was no significant difference in the recognition rates between the content creators and people working in different occupational fields. This was tested with a Mann Whitney test and that indicated no significant difference ($Z = -.967$, $p = .333$, $r = .09$). A Spearman's correlation analysis showed that there was also no significant correlation between level of education and recognition rates ($r = .006$, $p = .948$, $N = 117$). This suggests that overall, the level of education does not influence the ability to correctly identify human from AI-produced texts. However, it should also be stated that

the data obtained for this variable was highly skewed, with a significant proportion of participants having higher education degrees, and this could speak for limitation of objective analysis.

Comments such as “gut feeling”, “it feels like”, or similar appeared multiple times in the commentary of the quantitative part. This could suggest that some participants were looking at and assessing the text as a holistic piece and did not follow particular rules when assessing them. Other participants tried to analyze sentence structure and overall cohesiveness. Comments about the repetitiveness of arguments or non-cohesive arguments were linked with AI as an author, and remarks about emotions or displays of empathy were associated with the human author. In fact, participants that scored 100% recognition rate repeatedly visited the argument of repetitiveness and emotions in their reasoning for choosing the correct author. This would also confirm the findings from Túñez-Lopez, Toural-Bran and Valdiviezo-Abad (2019), suggesting that automatically generated news tends to include more repetition in its structure, while human-written texts tend to convey more opinions and thoughts. This finding conveys an essential lesson for PR and communications professionals that wish to utilize AI-powered text generators by highlighting the potential pitfalls to which professionals should pay extra attention. These remarks also reveal attitudes towards the machines and again show a need for transparency about the AI's scope of capabilities. It stresses the need for a thorough understanding of these tools, particularly for communicators, due to the high relevance of these tools to the profession.

Attitudes from PR professionals and implications on the profession

The qualitative part of the study consistent of a focus group discussion with PR professionals. The discussion explored the attitudes towards AI-powered tools and perceived risk for the profession. Overall, there was positive attitude towards the technology and willingness to apply it in daily business. The main pro arguments were the huge time- and money-saving potential of such automation. The concern discussed related to copyright, data protection and ethics. Some of these concerns and issues remain unanswered even though the development of AI has rapidly grown. This raises an important question about the ethical development and growth of AI use in professional contexts.

For the focus group participants, the overall perceived risk of AI for their roles was low. To justify their reasoning participants mentioned the diversity of their tasks and the strategic

orientation that their roles already had, something they argued cannot be replaced by artificial intelligence tools. This latter finding is in line with Gutierrez Loper et al.'s (2022) findings.

This presents some comfort for the profession as it suggests a potential pathway for evolution but not eradication. However, this does not make PR completely future proof as the technology continues to evolve and as mechanical tasks as well as tasks involving creativity, such as text writing, can be automated. It also raised the question of whether companies prefer to sacrifice human creativity and choose to work with AI only in order to save costs (see the case of a big German media outlet and their staff layoffs which saw the company implementing artificial intelligence to cover the tasks of the laid off staff - Hanfeld, 2023).

Creativity is believed to set humans and machines apart, yet this indicates that machines have successfully tackled one complex humanly trait, creating thus the possibility that, one day, they might outsmart humans completely (Bringsjord & Ferruci, 1999).

The possibility of the profession to be completely automated was also discussed during the focus group but the participants deemed it as unrealistic. Even though AI text generators mimic human writing well, they cannot surpass it. There was overall agreement over the assessment that AI is not quite there yet with its ability to completely replace the human mind. A brain-machine interface expert, Miguel Nicolelis, also claims creativity and human mental processing abilities can never be completely replaced by an algorithm or a machine. The reason for that is that the human brain does not operate in an algorithmic, programmatic, linear way but rather based on non-linear interactions between billions of neurons (Solon, 2017). This suggests that one of the traits that make humans irreplaceable is the unpredictability with which the human mind operates. Whether that remains an irreplaceable trait that secures the relevance of human workforce will be unveiled in the future.

Concerns and ethical implications

Overall, the potential of the software cannot be denied, but it should also not be feared. The PR profession should be a strategic counsel in an organization and the use of AI-powered tools can execute tasks more efficiently. What the reported adoption rates of AI tools could suggest is that PR professionals are still behind in thinking about the issues that AI presents to the profession, as also suggested by Gregory and Virmani (2020). The fact that more participants from unrelated fields of work reported prior experience in working with AI-based text generators raises the question of why PR professionals with their diverse competencies are not taking advantage of interdisciplinary developments or looking for technological innovations within their field.

Considering the overall concerns related to the use of AI, UNESCO (2023) does mention biases and ethical challenges, particularly when considering AI tools for decision-making purposes. This includes copyright and used of AI in a court of law. The biased machine concern also refers to biases that the machine displays in its outputs. This is logical, considering that AI are to a big extent trained on existing human-generated materials which, in turn, are also filled with hidden biases and cultural norms.

With regards to the geography of AI development worldwide, it seems that China and the United States of America are leading the investment and pioneering the development of different types of artificial intelligence (Holst, 2018). This also relates to the training data that the tool receives initially and on which the language model is trained. This would explain for instance the 'American accent' of NGLs relying on English and their tendency to deliver happy-ending outputs.

Machine "hallucinations", confident-sounding AI outputs that are not necessarily fact checked (Alkaissi & McFarlane, 2023), are also an increasing concern. This calls for cautious use and experimentation or what LaGrandeur (2021) associated with self-regulation of users and developers. Additionally, artificial hallucination also calls for external regulations on the matter. The focus group discussion also expressed expectations that regulatory bodies would set the frameworks for general data protection. These in turn could guide discussions and applications regarding copyright (see UNESCO, 2023).

Moreover, data security and data processing including data corruption and data loss are particularly relevant for organizations as they are linked to legal compliance thus bearing massive potentially negative consequences for their operation (Open Data Institute, 2017). For instance, the terms and conditions applied to the tool used for this study, Rytr, explicitly mentions that the company of the tool does not guarantee that there will be no loss or corruption of data (2022). Extrapolating from the case offered here to general applications and implementations of AI in organizations, awareness and understanding of data processing procedures is vital. In the hypothetical event of a security attack or data leak, company data might be exposed. Needless to say, vigilance is highly necessary when using AI tools.

Data protection concerns however are just as relevant to any other digital cloud-based applications, not only automatic text generators. Additionally, when talking about content creation or art creation, legal regulations concerning copyright need to be in place. This would be also applicable for the cases of fake news. *"I see the risk with fake news. This is a big threat from my perspective, but not for our profession"* said one of the focus groups participants. The reason why "The helper in the shadows" paid such attention to the recognition ability is due to the detrimental effect that such tools can have when used for malicious purposes such as producing fake news or misinformation. As already

mentioned, the commercialization of GPT-3 brings many possibilities for communicators. Just as it creates opportunities for PR professionals and journalists, it also creates favorable conditions for the creation of fake news or misinformation pieces. For Public Relations practitioners, this calls for extra vigilance and more robust fact-checking when creating written pieces that require web searches. Practitioners play an important role, and in order to protect the well-earned reputation they have, they must ensure quality output both content-wise and in terms of readability.

Misinformation and fake news undoubtedly have implications for the Public Relations profession. Fake news can cause severe damage to an organization's reputation (Rodríguez-Fernández, 2019). Because of their negative effect on an organization, it also makes them automatically relevant for the communicators, who must deal with them in crisis situations. Therefore, different communication models have already looked for concepts in dealing with such matters and have identified specific countermeasures. These countermeasures are to be employed according to the classification of the fake news, which can vary from attire, clickbait, manipulated or fabricated content (Fârte & Obadă, 2018). Looking at fake news from the transmitter side, social media spreads information that is going to attract a high response from millions of users, as that sits at the core of the profitability of these platforms (Olan et al., 2022). This was evident throughout the pandemic when a wave of misinformation started spreading via social media channels creating what the Director-General of the World Health Organization labelled as an "infodemic". Needless to say, the infodemic presented significant hurdles for organizations and governments leading them to carry out countermeasure plans while simultaneously increasing scrutiny of medical journals and media outlets (The Lancet Infection Diseases, 2020). The rapid spread and the high impact that this had in the given example urges for mobilization of officials and calls for increased fact-checking measures as well as continuous monitoring from the social media providers and from the general users alike (Olan et al., 2022).

Apart from being a potential fake news generator, when in the wrong hands, the GPT-3 model has also been shown to produce extremist texts (McGuffie & Newhouse, 2020). This links directly with questions about the ethical use of such tools and the need of transparency and copyright. Not only is the production of extreme-promoting texts of great concern for society, especially with the evidence of questionable recognition rates, it is a legitimacy threat for the PR profession. Moreover, by extension any (mis)use for AI that implies purposeful societal manipulation has an impact on human rights (Bullock & Luengo-Oroz, 2019).

To conclude, Public Relations is a profession that should consider the organizational and societal well-being at the same time. The rapid move towards digitalization observed in the last years places additional demands on professionals in the field. While digitalization has created a path for quicker, shorter and more direct path for communication, it has also

made obvious the need to react and respond quicker as well. While this was already in place in some organizations, for others, a shift in both how they approach PR and how they organize their organizational processes is still required. For communicators in such organizations the challenge is two-fold: to continue to support their organizations while they themselves must adapt. NLGs might not be the answer for all changes in the field, but they certainly present a great opportunity to become a valuable helper. Cautiously, this might be as good an invitation as any to evolve.

Disclaimer

This piece was written without any AI assistance.

Biography

Tsvetelina Dobreva is a Communications Manager, working in an international company in the automotive industry. Combining her previous studies in Psychology and her professional experience, she is interested in the synergies between people and technology. As an MBA alumna of Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, she took a deeper look at AI-based text generators for her Master Thesis, resulting in the study "The helper in the shadow".

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There is no shortcut to AI. Or is there?

How German communications professionals are navigating the AI revolution: Insights from a focus group discussion of the members of AG CommTech.

Christina Rettig and Thomas Mickeleit

In recent years, generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a tension field that holds the potential to disrupt the communications profession (Buhmann & White, 2022; Galloway & Swiatek, 2018; Moore, 2018). While the cost of acquiring AI training data has dramatically decreased, the computational resources required to train AI systems have surged exponentially (Epoch, 2023). Consequently, text and image generation models to the likes of ChatGPT or Midjourney have attained a quality standard compelling enough for communication professionals to incorporate them into their daily work.

At the same time, this is causing significant changes to the role of communicators, presenting a multi-faceted metamorphosis:

- On a macro level, the communications discipline is grappling with ethical questions: Will it bolster narratives that "normalize AI as a neoliberal ideal" or those that warn about the perils of the technology in increasing social inequalities (Bourne, 2019, p. 111; Klein, 2023)?
- On a **meso level**, with the surge of new AI applications being launched every day, organizations find themselves overwhelmed by the pace of advancements (Smith & Waddington, 2023): How can they navigate the risks and chances and identify a pathway for implementation?
- On the **micro level**, generative AI introduces a possibility that communications jobs may change or even be replaced entirely (Panda et al., 2019). How might the daily responsibilities evolve in the future, and what skill sets will become necessary?

These challenges prompted a collective of German communications professionals to engage in a focus group discussion and shed light on these aspects. The Arbeitsgemeinschaft CommTech comprises several hundred practitioners interested in advancing the digital transformation of their profession (Mickeleit & Forthmann, 2023). The notion of CommTech refers to the employment of digital tools, methodologies, and data to facilitate an organization's personalized interaction with stakeholders. This encompasses a wide range of tasks from content creation and dissemination to data-

driven storytelling and reporting (Rettig et al., 2023; Zerfaß & Brockhaus, 2023) – potential areas that could be further enhanced through AI technologies in the future.

To provide a common ground and derive a central proposition for the focus group discussion, a selection of studies was reviewed and compared. It has to be noted the introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022 significantly stimulated discussions about the role of AI in communications. At this juncture, there are relatively few academic papers available on this specific topic. Therefore, in order to broaden the scope of the analysis, we prioritized practitioner studies and whitepapers to ensure that the discussions reflect the latest advancements. While these resources might not strictly conform to academic standards, they provide preliminary insights into this rapidly developing field.

The reviewed publications mostly underline the potential benefits of AI, particularly in terms of improving efficiency and generating new insights. A survey by News Aktuell/PER agency (Ta, 2023) shows that 66% of 297 surveyed communications professionals see the opportunity to improve their work through AI, particularly in copywriting, topic identification, and media monitoring. A DMEXCO study (Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft, 2023) of 500 experts in marketing, communications, and media reports that 45% of respondents see the biggest potential of AI in the automation of routine tasks, with 27% noting the chance to reduce costs. Similarly, respondents to a survey of Hochschule Luzern including 208 communications and marketing professionals stated they use AI for inspiration, experimentation, short text creation, and data analysis (Mohr et al., 2023). Furthermore, they identified the saving of research time and reduction of outsourcing as key benefits. The studies also unanimously highlight concern about the risks associated with AI, including the overestimation of AI's capabilities (DMEXCO, News Aktuell/PER agency), the risk of fake news (Hochschule Luzern), and an impact on creativity (DMEXCO). Data security was not a pronounced concern in these surveys, or it was not probed at all.

When examined for differences, the studies present varied levels of optimism towards AI. The Global CommTech report (Purposeful Relations, 2023) suggests a confident approach among respondents, while the News Aktuell/PER agency and DMEXCO studies exhibit more caution and skepticism. Moreover, the perception of AI as a potential threat to jobs varies across the studies. This concern is seen as more significant in the Hochschule Luzern research, whereas in the DMEXCO study, only 30% of respondents expressed this concern.

Interestingly, the Global CommTech Report indicates a high level of confidence in the respondents' abilities to identify and apply new technologies for communications, with 67% of agency respondents and 52% of company respondents considering themselves extremely or very competent. This confident self-assessment contrasts with the findings of the News Aktuell and PER agency survey and the Hochschule Luzern survey. In these studies, 41% and 60% of respondents respectively reported having no contact with AI in

their work. This discrepancy suggests a potential gap between perceived competence and actual use or hands-on experience with advanced AI tools.

When synthesizing all findings, a core proposition begins to emerge: There is no fast track when it comes to the implementation of AI in communications. Organizations which have not yet reached a certain maturity with respect to CommTech may encounter significant challenges when it comes to implementing AI. Considering the dynamic pace of technological evolution, it is not sufficient to merely implement new AI tools. Rather, communications professionals must delve deeply into the topic, truly understand the intricacies, and engage in continuous learning and adaptation to fully leverage the potential.

Methodology

The core proposition 'There is no shortcut track to AI' was discussed in a focus group session with 15 German communications professionals in June 2023. The focus group was composed of communications professionals with a range of mostly 8 to 20 years of experience across various sectors such as Telecommunications & IT, Machinery/Equipment Manufacturing, Automotive, and Chemical industries. These participants represented an array of organizations, from small-to-medium-sized, from 15 to 30 employees to large corporations with over 1,000 to 100,000 employees, across both B2B and B2C markets, and including municipal utilities, governmental authorities, and communications agencies. The discussion lasted 105 minutes. For analysis, the recording was transcribed and summarized using an AI tool (RecapTalks), complemented by manual notetaking and analysis by 3 observers. The subsequent presentation of results merges these analysis methods, providing a view of professional opinions on AI integration in communications.

Results of the focus group discussion

Within the discourse among the AG CommTech participants, four primary themes continuously surfaced. Each theme carried its own spectrum of pros and cons and generated different viewpoints among the participants. While they do not necessarily represent consensus, these points encapsulate the predominant views of the group and indicate salient features regarding AI in communications.

1. Employee Readiness: The participants acknowledged the low entry threshold to AI, with numerous powerful tools essentially available at no cost, indicating that AI itself could be seen as a shortcut. However, the group also identified that the initial enthusiasm often gives way to disappointment when it comes to practical applications. They recognized the

impressive capabilities of current AI technologies but highlighted the outputs' lack of precision as a significant concern – an issue colloquially termed 'hallucination'. For communication professionals tasked with accurately reflecting an organization's specific messaging, this was identified as a significant issue. Accordingly, the initial excitement around tools like ChatGPT has somewhat cooled off. For this very reason the participants emphasized the necessity of fostering a culture that is generally open to digital innovation and CommTech, pointing out that this is the basis for a successful long-term deployment for AI.

2. Learning & Sharing: The participants underscored that the path towards AI implementation is a journey requiring ongoing experimentation. It can't be a direct leap from an analog world. This perspective emphasized the significance of learning from experiences and circulating these insights within an organization to ensure successful AI utilization. Strategic company-wide training and the cultivation of a digital mindset were identified as fundamental for the successful implementation and utilization of AI. Yet, formal training programs are scarce at present, with teams often learning through trial and error. Ideas for sharing knowledge and experiences are informally emerging within the organizations, highlighting the pivotal role of internal pioneers. In terms of initial steps, the participants considered it vital to start by exploring AI's impact on selected core operations of communication, such as synthesizing company information into a coherent narrative, handling media inquiries, and producing content.

3. Company IT Policies & Data Concerns: Participants recognized that not only specific departments but the entire organization influences AI adoption. They noted that issues of data security and protection represent substantial barriers to AI implementation, occasionally leading to outright blocking of sites like ChatGPT. Therefore, an organization's policies and rules concerning AI and tool utilization can significantly affect adoption in communications departments. In light of AI's dependence on accessible and extensive data, the necessity to address data silos was underlined. The participants also noted the challenges presented by the rapid emergence of new tools on the market, particularly for smaller teams. Despite the undeniable 'wow factor' associated with AI, the group acknowledged that these tools require substantial work and familiarization to yield productivity improvements. The participants further observed that these innovative AI tools often originate from startups, which might encounter rigorous and inflexible procurement processes within mature organizations. However, enthusiasm was expressed for new AI tools that could assure data security while effectively utilizing company data.

4. The Role of Communications in the Implementation of AI: The participants acknowledged AI's transformative role and anticipated that its implementation would lead to a large demand for guidance by communications departments. In their discussion about digitalization strategies, they noted that while their departments carry the responsibility of

facilitating this profound transformation, they often trail behind when it comes to their own digital evolution. The participants suggested that primary operations such as production and customer service usually receive precedence, with communications departments joining the digital journey at a later stage.

Furthermore, the group discussed how digitalization often demands structured and systematic processes to be digitalized in the first place, an aspect where communication processes can appear fuzzy and less defined. However, with the advent of large language models, the nature of communications seems more akin to these systems, indicating a possible shift in the field. The participants recognized that this offers a potential catalyst for communication departments: By integrating AI into their strategies and processes, they may not only enhance their efficiency but also elevate their strategic importance in the organization.

Discussion

In many ways, the central themes that emerged from the discussion align with prior findings. AI is viewed as significant in its potential to revolutionize the communications profession, offering enhanced efficiency and stakeholder outreach. Data security and internal processes, however, persist as substantial hurdles to AI implementation, reflecting a major concern in contrast with previous publications

The discussion reinforced the presence of typical tension fields within the realm of communications when it comes to AI. There is an acknowledgment of the efficiency and productivity gains that AI can bring, contrasted with concerns over potential job displacement due to automation. Furthermore, despite the expressed importance of employee readiness for AI adoption, evidence from the discussion suggests that numerous companies, even those with ample resources, are not proactively testing or implementing AI within a holistic company-wide strategy. This leaves communications departments to navigate the uncharted waters of AI integration through trial and error.

Hence, one significant takeaway is that adopting AI is not just about the technology itself but also about promoting digital literacy and preparing the workforce for AI-enabled roles. Successful AI adoption also relies on employees' willingness to use existing digital tools, indicating their readiness for more advanced AI applications.

Interestingly, the focus of the discussion was primarily on the productivity gains offered by AI, which is also echoed by previous reports. This could suggest a still limited understanding of the more extensive capabilities AI can offer, thereby confining the conversation to familiar territory. It’s worth noting that there is an additional untapped dimension to be explored: AI presents the opportunity for communications departments to create entirely innovative ways to engage stakeholders. From this perspective, AI

should not only be viewed as an efficiency tool, but also as a potential catalyst to redefine the strategic footprint of communications departments within their organizations. A broader understanding of AI beyond efficiency could unlock these possibilities.

Conclusion and outlook

The proposition ‘There is no shortcut to AI’ is certainly quite apt considering the complexity of the discussions. AI technology, despite its apparent accessibility due to powerful and often free-to-use tools, requires more than just simple integration into an organization's operations. It demands a holistic and multi-layered approach encompassing aspects like strategic training, fostering a digital mindset, addressing data security concerns, navigating procurement processes, and managing the change within the organization itself.

The results of the focus group and previous studies show that successful AI implementation isn't merely a switch from analog to digital, but a journey involving continuous learning. Moreover, the often-overlooked potential of AI to transform strategic stakeholder engagement suggests that a more profound understanding of AI is needed, beyond its ability to enhance productivity. This reinforces the idea that there truly is no shortcut to AI – its effective implementation is a complex process that requires a general commitment to digital communication technology (i.e., CommTech) in the first place.

Despite the demand for AI by communications professionals, there is a tendency towards inactivity amongst communications professionals due to perceived security risks and a superficial understanding of AI. On the other hand, waiting for future AI advancements might not mitigate this concern. Rather than deferring action, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that AI will be commonly used for managing repetitive tasks and generating insights in the near future, as current research anticipates. The increasing integration of AI implies that it cannot be ignored. Consequently, it is imperative for communications professionals to enhance their capabilities, including "digital skills for content creation, distribution and [...] monitoring" (Mickeleit, 2023, p. 51), as well as “a capacity for and commitment to ongoing learning and adaptability” (Macnamara, 2018, p. 17).

When appropriately managed, this would allow a communications department to rethink the value contribution of communications and shape its strategic role. And as the communications discipline becomes increasingly engaged and cultivates the necessary skills and competencies to master AI, its deeper involvement can finally catalyze the digital transformation of the entire organization.

Lastly, these themes require a continued debate. The participants of the focus group discussion expressed a keen interest in maintaining an ongoing dialogue on these

subjects. Regular events are being planned within AG CommTech to facilitate continued conversation and knowledge exchange on these critical topics.

Limitations

While this focus group discussion provides a snapshot of AI in communications, it has several limitations. Members of the AG CommTech group inherently harbor a positive bias towards digital tools supporting communication, implying an optimistic predisposition towards AI. Additionally, the group's participants are exclusively from Germany and volunteered for the group, limiting the diversity of perspectives. Nevertheless, the study results provide a glimpse of sentiments in practice and contribute to a better understanding of the topic.

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Disclaimer

This article employed artificial intelligence in specific aspects, namely language clarity and checking. The paragraphs were drafted and then prompted into ChatGPT for grammatical adjustments and wording refinement, preserving the original phrasing wherever feasible. Additionally, RecapTalks was employed for the transcription and preliminary summarization of the focus group discussion. Lastly, an AI-generated review of the literature was created by using ChatGPT to compile an initial summary and comparison. However, it is critical to note that the authors maintained full control over these areas to ensure authenticity and integrity. The guiding ideas and the central proposition, as well as the overall composition of the article was performed manually by the authors, ensuring human oversight and expertise in the final output.

Biography

Christina Rettig (ORCID: 0000-0002-2922-7044), as Head of Corporate Communications, oversees external communications for the international specialty glass and materials group

SCHOTT AG. Her team has been recognized for its successful B2B storytelling and adeptly manages all four media types – paid, earned, shared, and owned. Having obtained degrees in business administration and journalism, Rettig spent a decade in consultancy. In addition, she secured a master's degree in innovation and change leadership from York St. John University and is currently pursuing a PhD at Antwerp Management School, where she's investigating technology acceptance in the pharma industry. Rettig serves on the AG CommTech steering committee, specializing in and organization and KPIs & Reporting.

Thomas Mickeleit, founder of KommunikationNeuDenken, provides consulting services for communication departments undergoing digital transformations, such as implementing newsrooms. He is co-founder of the German AG CommTech working group, an initiative which has rallied +400 digital communication experts. Prior to this, Mickeleit served on the management team at Microsoft Germany as Director of Communications for nearly 15 years until 2020. His previous roles include Head of Corporate Communications at Volkswagen, IBM, and Grundig. Mickeleit began his career in 1987 as a press spokesman for the Berlin Senator for Economic Affairs.

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Getting colleagues comfortable with AI: A human-centered approach to technology in organizations

Monique Zytnik and Matthew Lequick

"It's so great. I use Chat GPT all the time," enthused my friend Jo, in rapid-fire English, elegantly, but furiously waving her arms around. "It's great for writing reports quickly, it makes me so much more productive." We were half-sheltered under a giant leafy tree shading a picnic table at the park. The summer rains had pelted down in Berlin and our phones told us that the sun would come out in a few minutes. Michael chimed in with his lilting Irish accent. He works for one of Berlin's many successful tech companies, managing human resources (HR) and working with many international developers in their 20s and 30s. Jo's company is also tech-based, a market disrupter for the fashion industry, and has just over a thousand employees, all of them a younger demographic. Alice was quietly listening.

AI has taken the world by storm since the launch of text generator ChatGPT in November 2022. Many of us adopted artificial intelligence (AI) years ago without even realizing it and have been happily using it ever since.

It's generative AI (GAI) that has captured the marketing and communication community's interest and that of my HR friends Jo, Michael and Alice. This is because GAI tools aren't just guiding and helping you search or find things; they are creating something new.

I come from an internal communication perspective and have been listening to how Public Relations professionals in Barcelona, digital marketing experts in Slovenia or intranet news editors in Melbourne amongst others, have been grappling with the 2023 boom of generative AI tools (IABC EMENA, 2023) and what this will mean for the communication profession. A recent McKinsey report predicts that 75 percent of the value that GAI brings will mostly impact roles in customer operations, marketing and sales, software engineering, and research and development. For such a huge impact coming our way, our community is still at the play-with-it stage. There are some like Jo, who are confidently using it daily, and others who are getting comfortable with the idea. We seem to be in a tips and tricks swapping phase as we share stories of amusing hallucinations that we've discovered; talk about how scared we are that three seconds of us speaking is all that is needed to synthesize our voice, or express that we are impressed by the realistic GAI

photos. The example of the GAI photo of the pope in a white puffer jacket crops up frequently.

Human skills are still winning, for now

As we chatted under that enormous tree, with the smell of fresh, wet earth around us, I gave them a great example of how Keith, one of our graphic designers at Open Communication Group, a global internal communication consultancy, had made an entire one-minute video on the benefits of internal communication using only AI tools: he used ChatGPT for the script, 11ElevenLabs for speech synthesis of the voice over, and Mubert for the soundtrack. He experimented on Leonardo.Ai for the visuals, however his prompting produced some strange results, so he resorted to Pictory that collates stock video. Although text-to-video generation is in its infancy, it's expected to continue to develop rapidly (McKinsey, 2023). Adobe has already incorporated a powerful and fully functional generative imaging tool that can fill in blank spaces on photos, creating an entirely new picture or filling in the image from prompts.

When Keith shared the video on a company morning Teams call, we were all impressed, at least until we looked closely. The content was very generic, and frankly quite boring. It lacked sharpness of message, and the content wasn't quite correct. Keith explained where GAI images had gone wrong, like a person's arm blending into a table, or a bit of an ear missing. The voice lacked emotion and the result was far from engaging.

I sensed that our global team of internal communication professionals were both excited at what artificial intelligence tools could do for us, and at the same time relieved that we wouldn't be losing our jobs just yet – we could still beat GAI when it comes to defining quality as well as giving something the right edge.

Is AI for everyone?

As Jo, Michael, Alice and I enthusiastically talked, popping strawberries in our mouths and sipping cool drinks from the Spätie[10], we discussed work. I know it was the weekend, but

[10] A Spätie is small, local convenience store like a kiosk or milk bar, which is typically open long hours and stocks everything from sweets, ice creams and milk to beer, wine, and tobacco. It is one of the few places open on Sunday in Berlin for basic shopping.

we somehow passionately got onto the topic of where AI was and how it could help us do our jobs better. And we delved into security issues these tools pose to our companies, like the Samsung 2023 case (Ray, 2023) and the upcoming European AI laws being proposed (European Parliament, 2023). Geeky, I know.

“What about most of the people working in companies? How can we make sure they are taken on this journey?”, I asked, my concern emphasized by my hand gestures.

I fear a growing divide in the workplace between those who can embrace GAI and experiment and teach themselves how to take advantage of it, and those who feel not only overwhelmed, but also apprehensive.

Only a few years ago at an Australian Embassy event, someone working in local government shared with me that working conditions were as low-tech as you could get. My ears pricked up as he shared with me in a loud whisper that colleagues would print out emails and put them on their desk to read later. A mail cart would sometimes take email replies printed on paper back to the original sender.

When running internal communication audits at global companies we’ve found similar cases. Often, when speaking to site or team leaders, it would emerge that technology use was sporadic. I remember talking to a sales team lead, who proudly told us about how they emailed a PDF newsletter to the sales team and had a shared drive where they’d save product updates for the team. We asked what they used Microsoft Teams for, and he replied that it only used for video calls.

Working with another organization last year, I remember a client sending me back a Word document as they didn’t know how to accept the tracked changes in the document. I can also tell you stories of senior leaders who have their executive assistants print out presentations so they can look at them in hard copy format and mark up any comments with a pen, which the assistant then needs to type up and send back to the document owner. No, the executive was not doing a final proofread, they were just reading the presentation. This happened in 2023.

If people aren’t using basic tools to even half of their potential, then what will this mean for new GAI tools?

Alice shared similar stories. She works for a large think tank where many of her colleagues are simply not comfortable with the pace of technology change. They would rather not know about it and rather not use it.

Amongst my three friends, standing under that tree and taking our fill of the fruits of summer, we came to the realization that the breadth of technology used within workplaces was about to expand significantly, potentially creating further inequality between those who use new technologies, and those who don’t. The digital divide, a concept that has been discussed since the 1990s and is based on access and skills with technology, is

widening (Van Dijk, 2017). Artificial intelligence is growing exponentially (Cowan, 2020), making the gap greater, even faster. The pace of the transformation is also expected to increase, with McKinsey predicting in June 2023 that half of today's work activities could be automated between 2030 and 2060, with a midpoint a decade earlier than they previously predicted.

Could AI decrease inequality?

On the other hand, what about the perspective that GAI potentially decreases 'an intelligence gap' between people? What do I mean by this? When powerful AI is something, everyone can suddenly tap into, differences in business acumen are potentially no longer a differentiator between people. Inequality based on educational background, privilege, resources, etc. could be limited in the future with broad access to GAI.

I had an excellent conversation with Martin Müller, the Head of Digital Communication at DHL Group, about this at a conference held on 3 July 2023. Humble, soft-spoken, Martin is extremely knowledgeable in the realm of digital communication. His multi award-winning team looks after 360-degree digital communication for a global company with 600,000 employees. That's a lot of employees, think of the population of Copenhagen, but spread across the world.

Martin sees us all of us as being at the start of the journey in AI based user interfaces. "The attraction of AI is that you as an end-user do not need that much knowledge to use it, because the beauty of large AI language models is that you can speak normally to these tools as you would do in everyday life," said Martin. "So, it is easier for users; it is more inclusive. You do not need to know anything about Boolean search terms to find information. You won't need to have any knowledge about the company structure to find something you just asked it, in the same way that you would ask your coworkers." Martin has the hope that GAI will be more inclusive for people.

And so, we've seen a new skill emerge prompt engineering. Basically, it's a whole new level to asking the right questions.

Technology adoption can be a tricky thing

AI tools are here to stay. Nearly every day sees an announcement of a new AI product or service, just look at the There's an AI for that website. Interestingly, at this stage most people seem to see GAI to be useful for responding to text or email or summarizing documents (Haan, 2023). Some companies, such as one of our clients, a global

engineering company, are creating their own closed GAI-powered ecosystems. With all the new shiny AI toys, it's easy to forget to take the human- centric approach and help these changes make sense to the end-users.

So, let's think about our people. The people working in companies, the end-users.

A recent Swoop analytics report contains a startling insight that 76% of employees are not active Microsoft Teams channel users. This was revealed in their 2023 M365 & Microsoft Teams report, which analyzed the digital behaviors of more than 266,000 M365 users across 19 organizations and 67,727 teams on Microsoft Teams across 17 organizations, all using hybrid work arrangements.

Microsoft Teams has a focus on collaboration, offering integrated calendar with video function and channels to collaborate with, plus file sharing via SharePoint. So why do only 24% of end-users use these collaboration tools to improve productivity? Swoop's previous studies have also identified large skill gaps for most employees on how to use and take advantage of all that Microsoft O365 offers.

I mention Microsoft 365 here as 1) it's the most currently used workplace suite globally and 2) Microsoft announced Copilot in March of 2023. Copilot is AI-powered and integrated into all core Microsoft tools. From the launch article: "from summarizing long email threads to quickly drafting suggested replies, Copilot in Outlook helps you clear your inbox in minutes, not hours." But there's a reminder: "As with any new pattern of work, there's a learning curve — but those who embrace this new way of working will quickly gain an edge" (Spataro, 2023).

When I spoke with Senior Technical Architect at Microsoft Technology Center, Peter Lunding Smith, on 30 March 2023, we talked about how Copilot was designed to work with you, not take you out of the driver's seat. It's clever positioning. It's designed to make you feel comfortable.

So how do we help people get comfortable with technology adoption? How can we help them take on a copilot?

As a global internal communication consultancy, we've had global organizations worldwide approach us with questions on what to do. What should they do?

A big-picture approach is needed

Before you dive into getting your people to adopt new GAI tools, you need to be clear about what you want to achieve. What is it you want your people to do differently? How will it impact them? Is your product and technology integration ready?

You get one chance to get it right.

The difference between you playing with GAI and your people using it in your organization is that you have just one chance to get them excited and onboard. If you give the majority of your people a bad first experience, you've lost them. This is the key point we see many technology-focused decision-makers missing. Having worked in a SaaS (Software as a service) company, a developer's approach of iterative improvement works for products, but not people.

How to run an adoption campaign

Like any other digital tools or platforms, GAI tools and services are only valuable if used. Otherwise, it's like buying a fancy car and leaving it in the garage. The underlying adoption process for AI is pretty much the same as it is for anything else, with one notable difference: fear hinders desire.

Adoption is essentially a change process from one point to another. For us, the most successful model for change management is the Prosci ADKAR model (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement). It works because it captures the essence of organizations: people.

For a change to succeed, the person changing must desire the change. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors can drive the needed desire. This goes back to Alice's comment that not everyone wants to use the tools. For desire to thrive and motivate, fear must first be banished or at least abated. And fear of AI is real. In a survey of 4,451 Americans, 61% said they believe AI poses risks to humanity (Lilly, 2023), and this fear is found across many walks of society. For example, Yuval Noah Harari, historian and professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, tells us AI "hacked the operating system of our civilization" with its "remarkable abilities to manipulate and generate language."

How do we banish that fear? We make AI familiar. We explain it. We show the benefits. It's a bit like giving a flashlight to a child who is afraid of the dark. We can start by explaining how AI is already a part of your life. Did we mention social media, Spotify, Uber and both Google and Apple Maps all use AI? Did you know that 80 percent of what we're watching on Netflix is driven by AI recommendations (Cook, 2023). See, it's already a little less scary. This is in part why Microsoft's naming of Copilot is so clever – AI is less scary when it's clearly working for you, right at your side in your metaphorical cockpit. This is also why it's clever to call the glitches and complete fabrications that GAI inexplicably spits out hallucinations (Klein, 2023). Hallucinations are something that humans also experience and can be more easily laughed away.

To run a GAI adoption campaign, we recommend that you double down on the awareness and desire phases in the ADKAR model. Awareness because it is the gateway phase to

desire, and desire because we should expect this phase to take extra effort and extra empathy to squash fear.

What this looks like is inspiring employees, then motivating them to act, and then finally share their learnings. We call our model simply Inspire, Act, Share.

Here at Open Communication Group, we started a project early 2023 to bring GAI into our consultancy. We are working through the awareness phase. We've identified those who are curious about and already experimenting with GAI. These are our first movers, and we've given them a mandate to go first, scout, and report back to an internal AI Task Force. We do this with our first movers because we know they will face obstacles, but that their abundant energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity will help them overcome them. By setting them up to share their learnings and experiences, positive and negative, we can smooth out any bumps to pave the way for the majority to follow.

Figure 1. Inspire, Act, Share model created by Open Communication Group

We've made a deliberate choice to not insist on the use of GAI, at least not for now. By empowering first-movers to experiment with GAI and identify what works and what doesn't, we can make the business case for adoption sharper, while not imposing change upon those who don't have the stomach for it yet. We know that not everyone goes through change at the same time and at the same pace.

Our first movers regularly report back to our broader team with learnings to keep them engaged, to inspire them with what is at the forefront of technology. This way, awareness

of the AI tools is already being built and spreads organically, so we'll have a solid foundation to build on once we're ready to take our AI adoption effort global.

It is still early days for GAI adoption with employees, and adoption for any technology can take up to a year or more. It takes time to adjust habits and behaviors. Although we haven't completed and reached the impact stage of AI adoption with a client, we good evidence to support that our approach to technology adoption works.

We've used this adoption approach to help the employees of the global brewing giant Carlsberg Group improve their digital employee experience and adopt new tools. Their previous intranet was not accessible on smartphones, nor did it allow for language translation, making them heavily reliant on local markets to cascade information. Partnering with Microsoft, we worked with closely with Carlsberg Group to workshop what the ideal modern employee experience looked like and what role an intranet should play in building inclusivity.

"One element of that was the use of Microsoft VIVA Connections to build an intranet directly in Microsoft Teams that would improve our efficiencies, respond to employee needs and build a sense of togetherness", said Communications Manager at Carlsberg Group, Emily D'Alterio (Microsoft 2023).

Through our robust adoption campaign, their new intranet, CarlsNet, make a 27% gain in views and a 50% increase in reach for global news compared with the previous intranet, connecting teams from across the organization's three regions and every company function, fostering inclusion and employee engagement. "It wasn't just about running an awareness campaign for CarlsNet; we were signaling a cultural transformation within Carlsberg," said Anne-Sophie Strandmark, Microsoft Office 365 Service Owner at Carlsberg Group (Microsoft 2023).

Our proven adoption approach was successful with DHL Group for their Smart Connect App, which won the DCA 2022, Inkometa 2022 and Dpok 2022 awards for best communication and adoption campaign. And, we've used it to increase Teams usage at Danish shipping and logistics company Maersk by 495% in one year, boosting collaboration.

In summary, we propose to run successful GAI adoption by:

1. Using a proven change framework. We've discussed and recommended ADKAR, based on experience and results.
2. Acknowledging, addressing, and banishing fear to make room for desire.
3. Identifying champions: find the people in your organization who are interested in generative AI and who have the soft skills and influence needed to forward the AI agenda and narrative. Send them out first.

4. Sharing: It's important to share early wins to build momentum. And it's important to share early failures, too—if you're brave enough to share a mistake or dead-end, you can prevent someone else on your team from doing the same.

The gremlin sitting on our shoulders

Our dream is that Martin is spot on when he says that GAI will be more inclusive for people. We want to see GAI so beautifully integrated into our digital workplaces that people don't need to think twice about using it.

The reality from our perspective is that technology is bumpy and will be integrated in steps over time. We will have to overcome fears at the individual level, and we will have to grapple with questions around ethics, laws, and regulation at the collective level.

What happens if we don't help people adopt? Playing devil's advocate, I always ask, what would happen if we did nothing? What if organizations see technology adoption as the employee's own domain and their own responsibility?

While Jo, Michael and Alice are comfortable and confident in humanity's ability to muddle our way through the sunshine and rain that new technology brings, plucking the juicy rewards of access to reliable internet and employers who are happy to give room for experimentation, we need to be mindful of experiences new technology has brought us in the past. We need to remain grounded with the reality that our people need to be supported on the journey and that everyone operates with change at a different pace. We need to shelter them from the sometimes-overwhelming winds of change.

As internal communication professionals, the best thing we can do right now is work with our business areas responsible for people and culture to understand where our people are, what training they need, and work closely with our tech teams on user experience and adoption. We must also keep close to and understand our colleagues and our organization to reduce fear and add support to the change journey we all face.

Because, at the end of the day, even in an era of GAI, people remain our greatest asset.

Disclaimer

This article was largely written by humans. Artificial intelligence was used in limited amounts for 1) generating ideas in the planning stage with ChatGPT and 2) language clarity in the final proofread stage by using Grammarly.

Biography

Monique Zytnik

Regional Lead DACH, Open Communication Group

With decades of experience in communication and specialized in internal communication, Monique Zytnik is a proven leader who inspires others, strengthens teams, and creates impact at scale. She has worked internationally, presented on best practice communication, and had communications campaigns recognized at the Gartner Awards 2020 (finalist) and the Digital Communication Awards 2021 (winner). She regularly writes for communication industry publications, drawing on in-house and consultancy work with organizations including SBS Radio Australia, The Australian Taxation Office, ANZ Bank, DHL Group, GEA, Adjust,

Her experience in digital communication, internal communication, strategic B2B marketing communications, campaigns, social media, Public Relations, and issues management is backed by a Master's in Communication (PR) with Honors from RMIT University. She is the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) EMENA Region Board Vice Chair and currently authoring Strategic Internal Communication in an Age of Artificial Intelligence, which will be published by Business Expert Press in 2024.

Matthew Lequick

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Matthew works with internal communication, change communication (Prosci Certified Change Practitioner) and employee experience.

With degrees in both communication and design, He blurs the boundaries between strategy, creative and technology to build great digital experiences for employees, from concept to delivery.

He has 18+ years of work experience in the US and Europe, including small design agencies and large multinationals like Microsoft.

About Open Communication Group

Open is a global internal communication consultancy, bringing change and transformation to life. We craft unique employee experiences through strategic advisory and creative execution. Read more at opencommunication.com

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AI in political communication – say hello to the best intern we've ever had

Franziska Mueller-Rech

How do you envision the work of a representative? Delivering speeches, giving TV interviews, inaugurating new kindergartens in their constituency – these are likely the common clichés. Those may be typical tasks of politicians, but of course, they represent only a small fraction of the job.

I am often asked about what my typical workday as an elected representative looks like. So, I will give you a glimpse into the engine room of my daily political work as a state representative in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and into how my team and I started to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help us tackle some parts of our parliamentary work. Needless to say, I'll share our learnings along the way to show you how politicians can benefit from AI in their daily work.

First of all: There is no such thing as a typical workday in my profession. There are tasks that may repeat or resemble each other, such as delivering speeches, reading summaries, giving interviews, or preparing for committee or plenary sessions. While this might seem underwhelming, it is the constantly changing impressions, the continuous learning, and the getting to know amazing people who (like me) strive to improve the world every day that make me love this job. In doing so, I have been invited and given access to places and people that otherwise might have been out of my reach. For instance, I have visited nearly 80 schools in my state and had the opportunity to engage in political discussions with teachers and students of all ages. I also had the opportunity to operate an excavator once. I event visited a pork processing facility. (More on this later.

Although it might appear otherwise, the largest part of a politician's job and mine included is listening rather than speaking: conversing with people, understanding their concerns, determining how politics can help facilitate their work or improve their lives, creating opportunities, especially for young people – these are the aspects that consistently energize me and provide motivation. Because I want to do what's right for the people, I want to listen to them.

Nevertheless, speaking is also crucial in my profession. The communication of government officials and representatives serves a democratic mission, some might even say a sovereign mission. Nothing less than the participation of citizens in democratic processes and thus the success of our social living together is at stake. Politicians are bound to explain their decisions to citizens in a comprehensive manner. This not only

serves our own desire to win consent and public votes but strengthens democracy and political participation in general. We must balance our communication every day between making the differences between parties and concepts clearly visible, while treating competitors in a fair and professional manner at the same time.

Just like in other areas of communication, politicians can and should make use of the opportunities of AI in their own communicative work routines, as it offers enormous potential in the partial automation of communication processes. No artificial intelligence will ever take a politician's position at the lectern. But considering the unglamorous text-related back-office tasks of parliamentary and governmental operations, AI has a lot to provide.

Laws are like sausages

As you can imagine, I have already heard multiple points of criticism on parliamentary law-making:

- either decision making takes too long or laws seem to get whipped through parliament without proper reading and discussion;
- lobbyists seem overly involved in writing laws and proposals or nobody seems to have been consulted;
- decisions are too far detached from reality of life or they try to cover every imaginable eventuality and therefore ooze with red tape;
- initiatives get watered down in the coalition "wash cycle", or they may be perceived as too strict and ideological;
- coalition disputes are sometimes fought publicly and fiercely, at other times differences between parties are hardly distinguishable.

In between all these criticisms, political work needs to be finely balanced to succeed and that success to be recognized by the public. All analyses, summaries, discussions, working groups, hearings and committee debates lead to compromise seeking, caucus and coalition votes, log-rolling, and/or even to postponements or, in the worst-case scenario, a budget veto. Unfortunately, whatever the issue is in focus, it can get out of sight during the process.

A German political idiom, falsely attributed to Otto von Bismarck (although it wasn't concisely attributed to anybody else either), encapsulates these many laborious tasks and loops of political work: "Laws are like sausages; it is better not to see them being made."

Just like with sausages, the end result needs to be right and politically palatable. Politics can never please everyone, but it must strive to serve society as a whole. Politicians are

held accountable for and advocate laws in their communication every day. But it is primarily the many staff members, who orchestrate and organize everything behind the scenes, who keep the operation running.

At the beginning of every law amendment is a need for change. Politicians are alerted by stakeholders (e.g., citizens, associations, press) that laws or government actions are no longer appropriate because society has changed. Stakeholders have claims and expectations of politics and laws that do not always align with the expectations of other stakeholders or me as politician. A significant part of everyday political life is therefore informing about and explaining decisions and representing my political stance in dialogue with citizens (FraktG NRW, 2001).

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So, politics is dealing with a ‘product’ that is in dire need of explanation and is best ‘sold’ through direct and personal dialogue within a stable ‘customer’ relationship. How does AI come into play here?

My team and I initially felt skeptical when we discussed using AI in our daily work. How can a piece of software build a personal relationship with voters or with other stakeholders? How can a machine communicate human decisions empathetically and furthermore let them be distinguishable from competitors? Initially, we dabbled with ChatGPT, experimenting with summarizing text and generating written content. We were astonished how well it performed. We anticipated a robot that would write like in an impersonal, unempathetic tone, and providing inadequate summarizes that would miss the important points. However, the outputs we generated instead turned out to be a genuine asset and support.

Welcoming the new intern

My team in the state parliament and I spend a significant portion of our time processing any sort of text. We analyze and summarize parliamentary papers (for instance, government reports), expert statements and policy papers from associations to prepare for discussions, events, committee meetings, hearings, and parliamentary debates. We also produce many texts ourselves, answering inquiries by citizens and associations,

writing articles for journals, press and social media, but above all, crafting political resolutions for committee and plenary sessions.

We analyzed which tasks AI could assist us with and quickly began referring to it as our ‘new intern’. Just like a new intern, AI came into our team initially knowing little about what we do, what the demands of my party, of me personally, my political key issues or key stakeholders’ expectations of me are. And of course, it had no clue of what kind of person I am as a representative, my concerns and how I communicate.

Bit by bit, we were, and still are, training the *new intern* and delegating tasks to them. As with all interns, however, we always keep in mind to check every piece of work before we use it.

Nobody can read everything

Additional to participating in plenary sessions, every representative is member of two to three specialized committees. I for one am member of the School Committee, and the Committee for Gender Equality.

Parliamentary work is characterized by wave-like surges in workload. The weeks preceding any committee meeting and plenary sessions are particularly stressful and characterized by very short deadlines. Using the example of preparing for a session of the School Committee in the NRW state parliament, let me show you the potential that deploying AI has in political work during session preparation.

A committee meeting is always planned for about three hours. Every faction can add items to its agenda: motions, requests for governmental reports, expert hearings or petitions. As there is no limit for representatives on how many items they can add, a single committee meeting agenda can include over 20 different items, each of which I must be thoroughly prepared for as a representative.

In addition to interviewing experts, the committee debates resolutions, laws, and governmental reports. In most cases, written documents serve as a basis for discussion. Depending on the subject, the size of the reports can vary considerably: from too brief to extremely detailed. We also discuss scientific studies, which often can be several hundred pages long.

Unfortunately as well, governmental reports or expert statements for hearings often come in at the last minute. Given that meeting agendas are generously long, I speak from experience when I say that political advisors and representatives alike are grateful for any assistance in summarizing reports and statements in time for any committee's consultation.

Let's be honest: hardly ever do we have enough time to read everything. Without help or adequate time for preparation, two viable options remain: skim reports or hope for postponement of items to the next session due to lack of time. Preparation time is highly appreciated.

If we're lucky, we get assistance from interns - like our *new intern,* AI. With their help, we win time to delve deeper into my core topics, such as digitization, fair education opportunities and teacher shortages, while simultaneously being able to participate adequately in every discussion on all topics - thanks to AI summaries. AI gives us time for our core issues and priorities.

I currently work with ChatGPT-4 and its plug-ins including Link Reader. It works really well for studies and other external documents but has (so far) one big drawback when it comes to governmental reports. Hard as it might be to believe, in 2023, governmental reports to the state parliament are still sent in on paper, which are then scanned and electronically distributed. Due to this, they are not machine-readable (to see an example check Ministerium für Schule und Bildung NRW, 2023 in the appendix).

Link Reader unfortunately cannot handle this yet. We can circumvent this by manually copying and pasting the text into ChatGPT but this solution too has its limitations. ChatGPT-4 queries are capped at 50 for 3 hours. If the report is too long, we reach and exceed this cap easily.

To be clear: We only utilize AI for parliamentary papers that are publicly accessible or self-generated texts that pertain to them. Non-public information must and does remain confidential; therefore, we do not use AI for handling such materials.

It is difficult for us to use any other AI tools once they require payment or are not browser-based. In our state, representatives and their aides are mostly prohibited to install software or use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to ensure security of data and parliamentary processes. We therefore do not have a budget for IT related expenses. So, all the licenses that I might need in addition to the parliament's standard IT package, such ChatGPT-4 or text-creation and analytics platforms, I have to pay out of my own pocket. That's manageable at 20$ a month but with business AI tools such as Viral Views (social media monitoring) or Otter.ai (real-time meeting transcription) where enterprise options would be needed to guarantee security and privacy, the costs are prohibitive.

Use good prompts, get good results (most of the times)

The quality of results significantly depends, as in any other field, on the prompts that we feed into the AI. For basic results, "summarize this text" is certainly sufficient. However, it is more precise and useful to specify both the form (prose or bullet points) and the length (word count) of desired output. Equally valuable is indicating the topics/sections that are most important to us. This works for AI similarly as with interns.

Currently we are still testing many different prompts and evaluating which ones work best for us. A reference to my role as an opposition politician and asking them to examine previous publications that either I or my party have authored on the respective topic is always a helpful reference. By default, we always instruct ChatGPT to analyze my party's last election manifesto. We also ask the AI to suggest possible points of praise and criticism for governmental reports.

However, even with version 4, ChatGPT still encounters limits with its internet research. For example: The state government recently restricted the right for teachers to work part-time (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung NRW, Handlungskonzept Unterrichtsversorgung, 2022). I asked ChatGPT to research and summarize the positions of different stakeholders and specifically named several teachers' associations on this topic. The response to my query was neither recent, valid, or complete. To this day my team and I were unable to identify other (affordable) AI that we could use to replace the 'real' intern and facilitate our work on research assignments such as updating our stakeholder mapping. We will have to wait a little longer for that – for example for Bard to become available in Germany (Google, 2023).

Give me a place to start from, not a blank page

Another big part of our political work is the creation of texts. As an opposition politician, I contemplate (almost daily) on how to drive the government and monitor their work. Often, topics come our way because the government itself takes action or publishes plans, the press reports on a topic, people actively contact me, or I see firsthand during school visits where we can improve.

I have a variety of tools to set a topic on the political agenda. For example, I can submit a motion to be discussed in plenary session, request an expert hearing, ask the government for a report, write press statements, answer citizen inquiries and – most frequently – produce posts for social media. For the latter, I often use videos to increase my reach. I don't use AI for this as I speak freely in my videos, without a teleprompter or script. But

when we have no recording capacity or already pre-produced texts on a topic available, we will post an image and text instead. Here again, our new intern AI can assist.

Once produced, content gets adapted and posted on multiple platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, my personal and the faction's websites and sometimes multiple times. This helps us ensure we have a consistent and coherent message and saves us valuable time and resources. For this adaptation work, AI can help us with that too.

Anyone who produces a lot of texts knows: It's much easier to change, shorten or expand an existing text proposal than to start on a blank page. AI, more specifically ChatGPT, is of big use for us at the very beginning by letting it present a good text proposal. This requires training. And I had to train ChatGPT on what a good suggestion is to us and how it looks.

Training the intern

A decisive aim of my political communication is to be perceived as trustworthy, competent, dedicated, and approachable. I want people to feel my passion and empathy, to know that I take their concerns seriously and am fighting for them. One of my fears when deploying AI was that people might believe I would be losing touch in letting a heartless machine handle their important concerns instead of caring myself.

I had to learn to let go of that fear. As mentioned before, I never let AI do the entire job, only preparatory parts. The final sparkling touch, the last adjustments make every text that is sent out truly mine: my reaction, my opinion, my initiative

Recently I found a way to train our AI intern on Twitter to better adapt to my very personal style:

"The problem with ChatGPT is that it writes like a robot. But you can train it to write exactly like you. Here's how you can easily train ChatGPT with only one prompt:" (Couvert, 2023)

Basically, I just fed ChatGPT with my posts on various channels until we both had enough. They then analyzed my writing style, which includes writing "personally and directly", "in a clear and understandable way" and "emotionally and passionately." I now use this analysis in prompts in which I instruct ChatGPT to write posts for me. I give them:

- the topic,
- my political position (briefly),
- the type of text (press release, parliamentary resolution etc.)
- if it's for social media, the respective platform,
- let them check my party's electoral program on it,

- and provide further instructions on what I want to include in the post.

You see, I give ChatGPT communication tasks just as I would give them to a ‘real’ intern.

The results are remarkably good. For example, as I use emojis (cautiously) on Instagram, ChatGPT even adds those. Having the suggestion, I then make the same changes I always make when someone else writes something for me: I rearrange a sentence, add, or rephrase something. For example, for a press release, I asked the AI to add a "crisp, demanding quote" to it. Despite my role in the opposition, I even once asked the AI to write a post somewhat more diplomatically.

Now that we and our new intern better trained, we are actually saving time in our daily work. Initially, we needed time to learn, experiment, and "play around" with the tools - but my team and I enjoyed this. We now use around 70-80% of the originally AI-generated text in our final versions.

What we should work on

The current potential of AI in political communication is already exciting. But we can also look forward to using the future potential of AI. As mentioned before, as a state representative I do not have a budget for non-personnel costs such as licenses or software. Therefore, I’m looking for affordable or free of charge AI tools that can assist us with other tasks in our political daily work, such as:

1. Analysis of large statistical data (e.g., census or school statistics) like DataSquirrel.
2. Social Media Monitoring like ViralViews, especially for politics: What topics interest people on different platforms on a daily basis, what is the tone of the discussion, what opinions are out there, should we and how can we respond?
3. Chatbots like LetsAskAI: Can this even work in political communication, are they too impersonal, would people even use them?
4. Calendar tools like Mayday: AI could be of use helping us to plan meetings, plenary and committee preparation, office tasks, travelling and as well time to unwind and recharge.

Wrapping it up

Artificial Intelligence is hugely interesting on so many levels: politically, socially, ethically - but also in terms of our very own personal working environment. Many people, and this number has increased recently, are optimistic about AI (Beauchene, de Bellefonds,

Duranton, & Mills, 2023). I count myself among them and believe that AI will fundamentally change our lives in a mostly positive way.

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As a politician, I want to be part of the avant-garde, using AI myself to learn more about it and to be able to contribute to a fair and successful transformation of economy and society that AI is initiating.

The advantages are clear: The support of AI in political communication gives us more freedom for other tasks – such as talking to our constituents. It also shortens our reaction time, which can be crucial to set the tone of a debate or at all be quoted in the press.

I recently pitched for more AI use in our everyday work in a faction meeting. At last, I want to share the following appeals and rules to successfully use AI in political communication that I gave to my fellow representatives:

1. Be open and curious.
2. Good prompts lead to good results (most of the times).
3. Check the results – they're an intern, not an expert.
4. Always adjust any written text
5. Practice, practice, practice!

...and lastly:

6. Have fun.

Disclaimer

The whole content of this chapter is written by the human author. The essence, arguments, and viewpoints expressed herein solely reflect the author's expertise and perspective. However, as the text was originally composed in both German and English, the ChatGPT language model has been used to assist in the translation of some sections from German to English.

Biography

Franziska Mueller-Rech served as a representative in the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) from 2017 to 2022. In January 2023 she took a vacant seat and since then works as a legislator again. She is spokesperson for School, Gender Equality, and Queer Politics for the Free Democratic Party faction (FDP). Her political goals include equal educational opportunities regardless of young people's backgrounds, a fair and cosmopolitan society, and leveraging the opportunities presented by digitization, particularly in schools.

During her parliamentary hiatus in 2022, she herself seized the opportunity for lifelong learning and is currently studying "Communication and Leadership" alongside her mandate at Quadriga University of Applied Sciences Berlin, aiming for a Master of Arts degree.

Before her full-time career in politics, Franziska worked as a team manager for a German insurance group. During her training as a Management Assistent for Insurance, she simultaneously studied Insurance at TH Köln (Technical University of Cologne). Photo credit: James Zabel

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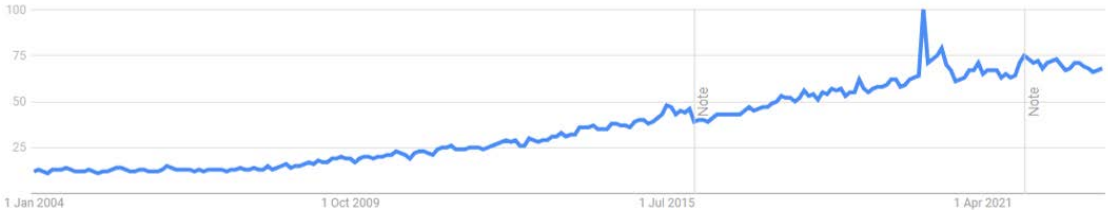
Harnessing AI in PR: using Automated Narrative Analysis and Content Classification in an era of “cancel culture"

Antony Cousins

“Cancel culture” has played a significant role in public discourse in recent years, peaking in 2017 according to an analysis of the use of the term ‘cancel’ according to Google Trends (Fig 1.). Scholarly understanding of the phenomenon is still at its nascent stage (Tandoc et al., 2020) but it could be described as members of the public calling out individuals transgressing norms and ostracizing them on social media and other venues (Saint-Louis, 2021).

Figure 1. Google Trends analysis of the term ‘cancel’ being used worldwide since 2004 (2023).



There’s further evidence that this is a trend set to increase in impact on brands. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2023) in the majority, 19 of the 28 countries surveyed, it’s a minority of respondents that think businesses can avoid being political. In other words, the majority of people surveyed expect that businesses will become, or are already, severely polarized on contentious societal issues.

Gen Z (born between the mid 1990s and 2010) are arguably driving this trend. After all, they are the most likely of any generation to make purchase decisions based on values and principles that are personal, social, and environmental (FirstInsight, 2020) with 72% compared with 70% for Millennials and 63% for Gen X (n=1,000). Moreover, Gen Z affluence is increasing: currently evaluated at $360B in spending power in 2021 (GenZplanet, 2023) compared to $143B in 2018 (Barkley, 2018).

However, we have recent evidence that “cancel culture” is not a tool limited to this demographic group and that it is having real financial consequences. In March 2023 a transgender influencer released a video on social media platform TiKTok promoting Bud Light. This was an effort by Bud Light to attract younger consumers but in the month following the advertisement, sales of Bud Light and Budweiser dropped 24.6% and 9.2% respectively, for the four weeks ended June from a year earlier, while Modelo Especial sales rose 10.2% according to the consulting company Bump Williams, which sources data from NielsenIQ (The Guardian, 2023). The cause of the fall in sales is attributed to a backlash from American conservatives and is reported to be responsible for the announcement by Anheuser-Busch, the parent company of Bud Light, that they would be laying off 350 employees on the 27th July (NBC News, 2023). This could suggest that the weak relationships between customers’ values and beliefs and their buying behavior (Collins et al., 2007) have evolved so much that they are now strong enough to influence brands.

This leads us to the conclusion that even if there’s only a moderate correlation between buyers’ beliefs and their decisions to purchase, boycott or ‘cancel’ a brand then PR professionals representing those brands need to find ways of quantifying the beliefs of certain audiences as well as the reaction of those audiences to events and their own actions. They need to do it quickly and accurately, as their response to any given societal issue, or not, could determine their success or failure to achieve their intended outcomes with those audiences or even risk the demise of the corporation (Collins et al., 2007).

Making the task of Public Relations professionals wishing to measure or quantify this phenomenon more difficult is the estimate that 80–90% of today’s data are unstructured text (Harbert, 2021). This creates a significant challenge for quantifying and making sense of consumer reviews, social media posts, new articles, blogs and forum data.

So, for Public Relations professionals to keep up with the changing demands of new audiences, and the increasing risks for brands caused by these demands, new means of measurement and evaluation are required which support the analysis of vast quantities of unstructured text.

In this paper we focus on two areas where advances in Artificial Intelligence technology could have the largest impact on the role of the Public Relations professionals in helping to quantitatively and qualitatively analyze unstructured text and protect their brands from being cancelled: automated narrative analysis and content classification. In doing so we will provide examples of the practical applications of machine automated narrative analysis and content classification for PR and communications in particular with some, but not limited to, our work at Cision, a global Public Relations and Communications software and services provider.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is an interdisciplinary research methodology that interprets structured accounts of experiences, known as narratives. Drawing from various disciplines like literary theory, linguistics, sociology, and psychology, Narrative Theory emerged in the 1970s (Josselson & Hammack, 2021) and it examines elements of stories – their themes, structure, characters, and cultural context – to elucidate deeper meanings and social constructs (Bruner, 1991; Riessman, 2008). In doing so, it can help uncover patterns, reveal identities, explore human agency, and interpret the world from the narrator's perspective (Polkinghorne, 1995).

As a method of analysis then, narratives would seem to provide us a way of making sense of the vast amounts of text being shared online. However, while there has been some academic study into how a professional communicator constructs narratives to resonate with intended audiences (Kent, 2015) no significant studies into the application and effectiveness of narrative analysis for Public Relations measurement, evaluation or generating insights were found during the preparation of this article. This raises questions about the potential approaches, value, and challenges of using automated narrative analysis in this context, based not on the development or delivery of one's own narrative, but in identifying the narratives being shared by users of the internet.

A definition of narrative for Public Relations

There are seven common features that can be used define a narrative emerging from the literature reviewed. However, these features haven't been tailored or made relevant to PR. Thus, Table 2 provides an overview of the features of narratives as described by the available research and proposes a new definition which makes them relevant to PR:

Table 2. Overview of narrative features and their relevance to PR

Narrative Feature	**Current Description**	**Description of relevance to PR**
Temporal Sequence	Narratives convey events in a temporal order, illustrating cause and effect relationships or how one event leads to another over time (Riessman, 2008).	A narrative must start somewhere and tracking its growth, or decline, over time is key to using narratives in insights or measurement.
Characters	Characters are central to narratives. They may be people, organizations, or even non-human entities such as nature or technology (Bruner, 1991).	The characters in a PR narrative are the authors of the posts, articles and other media that make up the narrative. This could include the organization itself, its employees, clients, or even its products or services.
Plot	A plot gives a narrative its structure, connecting events and characters in a meaningful way. The plot often involves conflicts or challenges that characters must overcome (Polkinghorne, 1995).	Narratives can be started by, and pass through, events that capture attention or evoke emotions related to a brand, and industry or influential person.
Setting	Narratives occur within specific contexts or settings, which could be physical, social, cultural, or temporal. These settings influence the actions and interpretations of characters (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).	On which platforms and in what geographies and languages is this narrative being shared? Is it entirely online or it could cross into debate and real-world events?
Themes	Narratives often revolve around central themes or issues, which help to give the narrative coherence and significance (McAdams, 2011).	Narratives are defined by all these factors; therefore they are measurable and tangible. However, they can be related to broader or deeper themes.
Point of View	Narratives are told from a certain perspective or point of view. This shapes the way events and characters are represented and interpreted (McAdams & McLean, 2013).	Typical sentiment models may not be best suited to determining any given narrative's point of view on a subject, product, brand etc. However, targeted sentiment models as we're deploying at Cision can be extremely effective in categorizing narratives as either 'for' or 'against' a certain point of view.
Coherence	A narrative should have a certain level of coherence or unity, linking together its various elements in a way that makes sense to its audience (Bruner, 1991).	The individual opinions, articles and content that make up a narrative can be tight and coherent or more loosely connected.

Automated Narrative Analysis

Given that Cision is a commercial business, there are limits to how much information can be shared about the technical details of our automated narrative analysis algorithms. However, to provide context and understanding of how we produced the examples later in this paper, here is a simplified explanation.

Firstly, we gather media mentions on a topic using a combination of Boolean logic to narrow down the results to traditional and social media mentions relevant to that topic. Then we group together similar statements shared in these mentions and provide a title which summarizes the group of statements. Each statement, which we call an 'opinion', has a coherence score determining the strength of relationship that opinion has to the cluster of other opinions. The cluster of opinions is what we call a narrative. By aggregating the sum of likes, shares and engagements of the individual opinions in a narrative, we can create overall size and popularity scores for the narrative, enabling comparisons and trend measurement over time. This provides insights analysts with the ability to effectively understand whole topics, in minutes, through looking at the narratives represented, instead of every single individual mention.

Automated Content Classification

As there can be hundreds of narratives around a single issue at a time, a broader approach to both automate and analyze data is needed. While this builds on content classification automation, it is not a restrictive process. On the contrary, by combining content classification with automated narrative analysis we can highlight the most relevant narratives to the purpose of the analysis, e.g. the most racist narrative or the most sexist narrative.

To ensure broad coverage not just of the most likely but other possible sources of cancellation, nineteen models were developed including:

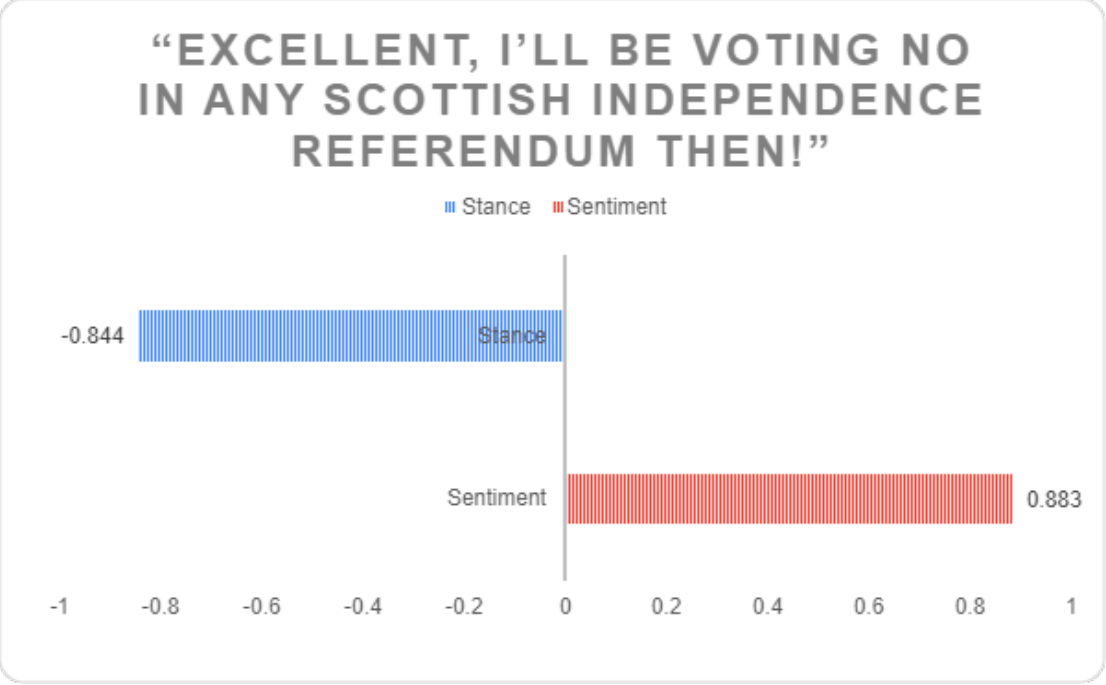
- Controversy
- Hyperpartisan
- Satire
- Subjectivity
- Sentiment
- Emotion
- Clickbait
- Spam
- Sarcasm
- Racism
- Insult
- Sexism
- Threat
- Hate Speech
- Toxic
- Obscene
- Harmful
- Fake News

We used standard approaches to training natural language processing algorithms to classify text as being likely, or not, to contain one of the types of content. We then applied these content classification algorithms to the traditional and social media mentions related to a topic. After carrying out narrative analysis on the mentions in that topic, this provided additional metadata for the narratives and more avenues to filter and order narratives making the insight gained more relevant.

Sentiment models have been commonly used in Public Relations for many years, despite their known flaws including, but not limited to, dealing with context, ridicule, and multiple emotions (Nandwani & Verma, 2021). To overcome these issues, and to achieve a 'point of view' analysis for each narrative, we have also developed a 'targeted sentiment' model which uses the provision of a keyword to target the sentiment analysis for more accurate results. We call this model: 'stance'.

In this example we compared the results of Google's freely available online sentiment model (2022 version) vs. our Stance model (2022 version) in analyzing the text of a tweet about the potential Scottish referendum. The sentiment model scores the text as highly positive. However, the stance model, when provided with the keywords: "Scottish referendum" correctly determined that the text was negative towards the Scottish referendum. Combining the results of this model with narrative analysis enables us to identify a narrative's point of view towards a given topic, or brand.

Figure 4. Sentiment and stance model assessment comparison a tweet (Cision, 2022)



Putting it together

As alluded to earlier in this paper, while there isn't any empirical research on the effectiveness of automated narrative analysis in the ways we have used it, we have already built this technology and we have employed it on real world issues for brands and agencies.

Here are some examples of how narrative analysis, combined with content classification, can not only generate the kinds of insights PR and communications professionals would take much longer to produce through human analysis, but they can also provide results that would simply not be feasible with human analysis, certainly not commercially feasible in any case.

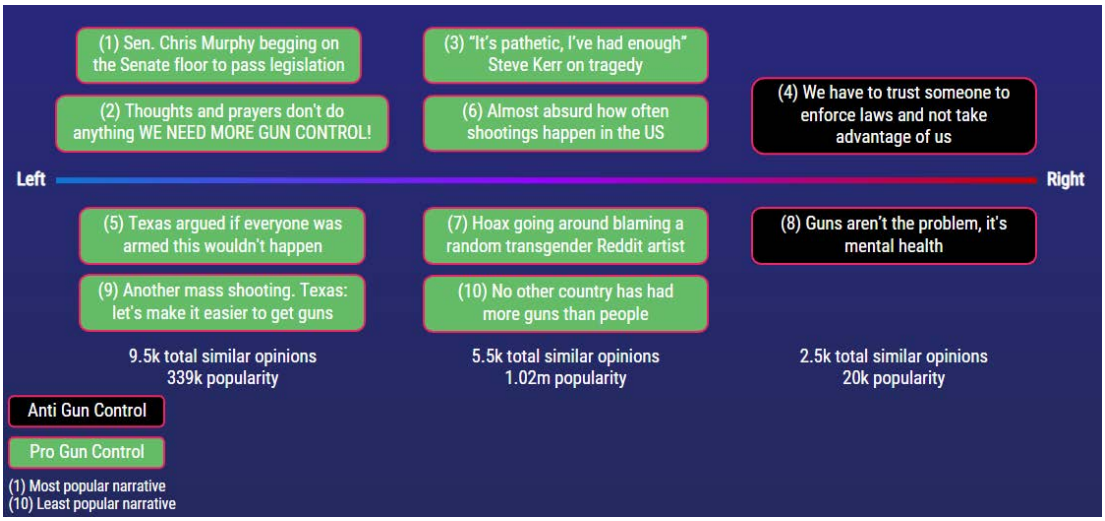
Gun Control

In the wake of the tragedy of the mass-shooting incident at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas in May 2022 (BBC News, 2023) we analyzed 91,000 social media mentions of 'gun control' across traditional and social media platforms.

The 'point of view' analysis of the narratives using stance provides a classification of narratives that are either broadly 'for' gun control or against it. The automated analysis also provides metrics for the 'size' of the narrative in terms of the number of similar opinions being shared that make the same point and the 'popularity' of the narrative being determined by the sum of the likes and shares of the individual opinions being shared online, e.g. on Twitter.

This analysis also provides other key elements of the narrative in terms of characters. For instance, the state of Texas appears to be a character in the broader plot of whether access to firearms should be expanded or reduced.

Figure 5. Comparison of pro- and anti-gun control narratives emerging on social and traditional media after the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde mass-shooting



Nvidia purchases ARM

Too much information is one of the main challenges of automated narrative analysis and this has a great potential to hinder and delay human interpretation. Figure 6 shows the complexity of a such a narrative display across time, highlighting at the same time the need to be able to zoom into the data.

Nvidia was seeking to acquire UK-based chip designer Arm. In 2021, as the company was facing regulatory and anti-competition interests in the acquisition, two most important narratives emerged: in one of them the 'character' of Nvidia was the antagonist, stifling competition. For Nvidia this was not a positive narrative. In the other, the company could be hero of the story, the one driving more innovation at Arm. To counterbalance the negative narrative, a conversation around Nvidia contribution was recommended but, more importantly, the result of such action could be measured in the future changes in relative size and popularity of these narratives.

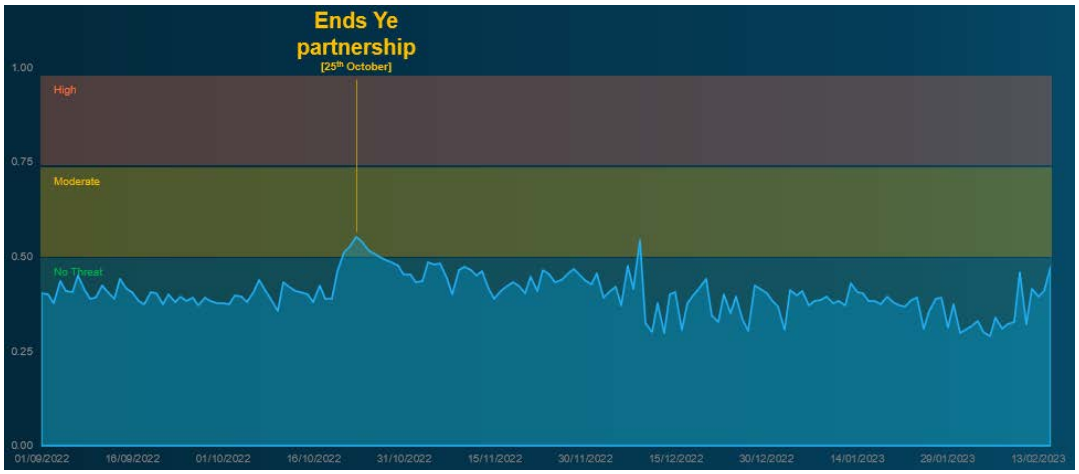
Figure 6. Comparison of Nvidia content and emergence of different narratives

Adidas on Twitter

In some cases, we have found it can be useful to start with the content classification in order to identify the time period or platform(s) upon which to then conduct more in-depth narrative analysis.

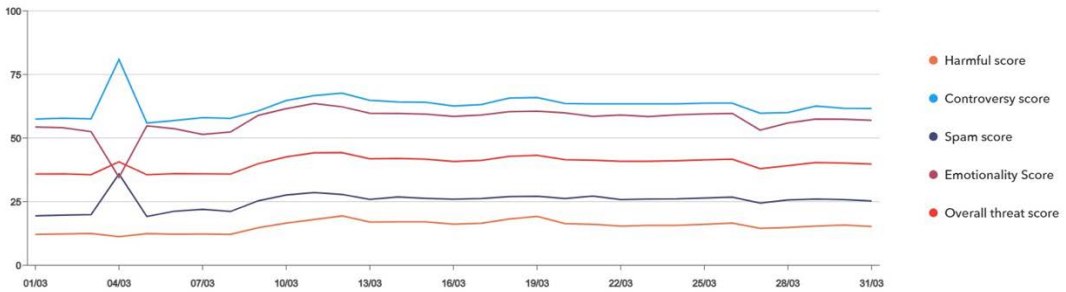
To simplify things further, we have combined the results of all the content classification models into a single score using a proprietary calculation which, again for commercial reasons, cannot be shared publicly. However, you can see the use for such a score in analyzing this sample of 50,000 tweets all related to Adidas from the 1st of September 2022 to the 15th of February 2023. That's over a month before Elon Musk completed his acquisition of Twitter until three and a half months after. Figure 7 shows how the score peaks after Ye (then Kanye West) shared an antisemitic tweet which led to his account being banned on Twitter and also the end of his partnership with Adidas. The figure also shows that despite a prolonged period of higher risk and a second peak, the average Risk Score after Elon Musk's acquisition completed on the 27th of October 2022 falls to an average of 38.9 from 44.2 before the acquisition.

Figure 7. Risk Score profile for Adidas (Cision, 2023)



This approach of using content scoring as a means of identifying spikes or points in time in which to focus narrative analysis could have greater application in early warning. Figure 8 shows the Risk Score profile for Silicon Valley Bank (SVB):

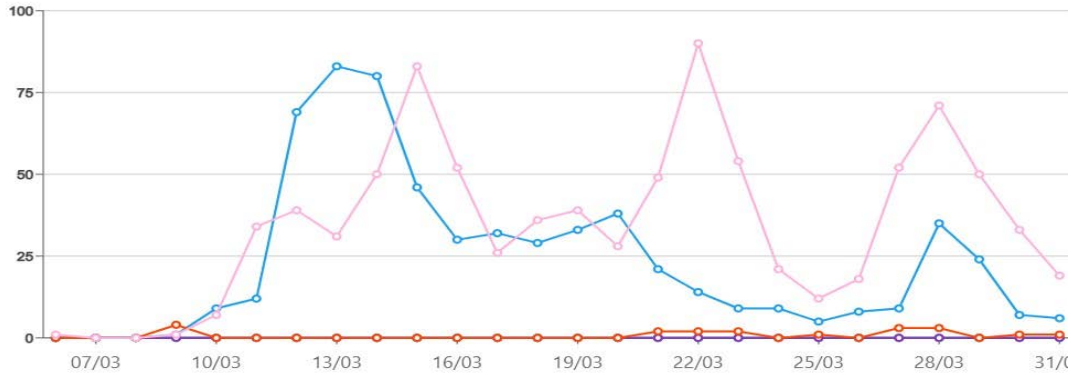
Figure 8. Risk Score profile for Silicon Valley Bank (Cision, 2023)



Comparing this chart to the timeline of events that led to the collapse of SVB demonstrates that the spike in controversy on the 4th of March 2023 could have alerted SVB to the need for more external stakeholder engagement much sooner than their press release and statement from the CEO were released.

Analyzing one of the largest narratives from the SVB failure also demonstrates how the narrative setting can also provide useful intelligence for a PR professional to act upon:

Figure 9. Analysis of narrative by platform (Cision, 2023)



This narrative was titled by our AI as “Silicon Valley Bank has failed”. Interestingly, we first detected it on the 9th of March, a day before the bank officially failed. What this shows is that on the day of the failure the narrative was as present on Twitter as it was in news media articles but, as the crisis headed into the weekend, the traditional media coverage dropped while Twitter continued to talk about the bank. At this time the US Government was attempting to calm the markets and prevent contagion, largely by speaking to the media. However, it’s clear from this analysis that more social media engagement through official or influencer channels may have been more effective at engaging the interested audience and dispelling rumors and fears.

Conclusion

The rise of cancel culture and increasing polarization, driven by changing consumer demands, can have real and significant financial implications. Early detection of contentious content, along with effective response evaluation, is essential for PR practitioners.

Automated narrative analysis, combined with content scoring and targeted sentiment modelling, offers a new approach to PR measurement and evaluation that can aid in devising effective responses and resonant language for all stakeholders. This advancement safeguards against the growing risks of cancel culture. Our practical applications of these methods and technologies demonstrate value but the lack of empirical evidence and research means human oversight and insight are essential, especially to ensure validity and trustworthiness of data sources used in the analysis.

Disclaimer

Google Scholar and ChatGPT were both used for research when identifying relevant literature. ChatGPT was also used to manage and provide APA7 format compliant references as well as to proofread the paper from the perspective of likely audiences and provide feedback.

Biography

Antony Cousins is currently Executive Director of AI strategy for Cision, the largest provider of PR and communications technology globally. He joined Cision through the acquisition of Factmata, an AI startup focused on detecting misinformation and harmful content where Antony was CEO. Antony has over 20 years of experience in communications and technology leadership, including 14 years with the British Government in the UK, Europe and across the Middle East. He has held diverse roles in PR, media relations, internal communications, political analysis, counter-terrorism and, over the last 10 years, AI-tech leadership. Passionate about purposeful tech innovation, Antony enjoys collaborating with data-driven companies to enhance lives. He is an accredited PR practitioner, CIPR committee member, part of the UK's All-Party parliamentary group on AI, chair of AMEC's tech-hub and was named in PRWeek's 'Dashboard 25' for 2023

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Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations and Communications

An Approach for Integrating AI Education into Communications Curricula

Hemant Gaule

How ChatGPT has Democratised AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI)—a term that encapsulates both a futuristic concept and a suite of tools manifesting this idea—has been in our lexicon for a considerable amount of time. From first being coined in 1956 (Russell & Norvig, 2020) to its growth in the 2000s (Tegmark, 2017). The dramatic enhancement of its capabilities can be attributed to a confluence of pivotal factors, culminating in a technological crescendo at a uniquely opportune moment. There are four salient catalysts that have instigated this technological renaissance:

1. **A surge in computational power**: Previously, computing hardware was a limiting factor, posing as an infrastructural bottleneck. However, the evolution in hardware technology has catapulted computational power, propelling an AI boom. Supercomputers, crucial for data processing and powering generative AI, operate on potent chips known as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). Nvidia, became the last company to breach $1 Trillion valuation (Reuters, 2023), as it dominates approximately 80% of the GPU market.
2. **The proliferation of data**: A rise in both the quality and quantity of data available for training sophisticated language models, providing the necessary fuel for AI's rapid development. International Data Corporation predicts that the Global Datasphere will grow from 33 Zettabytes (ZB) in 2018 to 175 ZB by 2025 (Reinsel, Gantz, & Rydning, 2018). A survey showed that an increase in the size of training data has been crucial to development of smarter models (ZHA, et al., 2023).
3. **Enhancement of algorithms**: Traditional machine learning methods have been progressively superseded by advanced neural networks, with the emergence of adversarial networks further elevating the output quality of generative AI.

In the preceding year, OpenAI, an innovative organization dedicated to advancing digital intelligence, has propelled AI research to stratospheric heights by crafting the most sophisticated Large Language Model (LLM) to date, while simultaneously democratizing its accessibility. OpenAI established a conversational interface permitting direct interaction with this state-of-the-art AI, capable of generating contextually logical text.

Moreover, the organization open-sourced its API, empowering third parties to construct innovative solutions atop their LLM—GPT.

This pioneering step has catalyzed a wave of unprecedented possibilities, particularly in retail applications, such as generating text and code, making AI accessible to even the uninitiated. No longer does one need to be a technology savant to comprehend or devise solutions from it. Of all the components bolstering AI's inescapable role in our future, this democratization stands as the most influential.

Public and organizational responses to this AI revolution span a wide spectrum, oscillating between trepidation and optimism. An Ipsos survey revealed that 51% of Indians feel AI could replace their jobs, 62% expect transformation (Ipsos, 2023). Irrespective of one's stance within this range, it is crucial to accept the inevitability of AI's expanding influence, emphasizing the need for comprehensive preparedness in harnessing AI's potential.

As academics, we are in a position of delicate responsibility. We must quickly learn to assimilate AI knowledge into our curricula, besides imbibing it ourselves, to ensure that our students are future ready. It wouldn't be enough to be familiar with AI, it would be necessary to have more than a basic competence in it. The role that Digital Media skills had in the skill set of a competent communications professional in the early 2000s, is the role that AI Competence will have in the rest of this decade. That is where we are. In fact,

1. Since GPT-4 was launched in March 2023, there's been huge interest in prompt engineering. AI and machine learning specialists are the world's fastest-growing jobs (World Economic Forum, 2023).
2. A lot of companies are paying six figures for jobs around Prompt Engineering, that don't even require technical knowledge (Popli, 2023).
3. Accenture's research found that across all industries, 40% of all working hours could be impacted by Large Language Models (LLMs) like GPT-4. I imagine this number to be a lot higher for Public Relations & Corporate Communications (Daugherty, Ghosh, Narain, Guan, & Wilson, 2023).

Accenture's studies and the insights therein have substantial implications on the communications profession. I expect that number – 40% of all working hours, to be a lot higher for communications disciplines, which rely extensively on researching, processing, analyzing information. Which makes it even more crucial for communications academics to bring AI to the fulcrum of their curriculum building approach and integrate it seamlessly. The next section discusses an approach to achieve this.

How to Integrate AI into Communications Curricula

In order to build a roadmap that brings AI familiarities and competencies into communications curricula, it is imperative to understand how it can be adapted, and work backwards from there. This section first looks at the order in which AI is adopted and the conditions necessary for its effective adoption. Subsequently, this paper will reveal similar necessary conditions for academic institutions adopt it into curricula, particularly looking at AI applications from the perspective of ease of use and accuracy.

The AI Adoption Hierarchy

The progression of AI adoption unfolds across five discernible tiers, each marking a distinct phase in the integration of this transformative technology within an organization or individual's operational framework:

1. **AI Solutions**: Certain organizations are capitalizing on the accelerating trend of AI development by designing products specifically rooted in AI. For instance, Clan Connect, an India-based firm, employs machine learning to enable brands to identify, connect, and collaborate with the most suitable micro-influencers (Team Inc42, 2023).
2. **AI Additions**: Some organizations are augmenting their existing technological solutions by incorporating AI-based enhancements. While a plethora of entities are exploring this avenue, others find it superfluous given their current operational efficiencies. For instance:
    - **Canva** – an online graphic design tool added several AI driven assistant solutions within the service to generate or edit content. Similarly, **Invideo** – a video editing tool added an AI driven video creator.
    - Microsoft has announced Copilot – an AI assistant which will integrate Microsoft office suite services.
    - Khan Academy is bringing AI to its teaching environment by using LLM to create an interactive educator for the learner, and help the educator create learning tools better (Khan, 2023).
3. **Supported by AI**: Certain sectors are set to undergo significant transformation due to AI integration, with customer service projected to be the most impacted. Companies such as Air India are exploring the utilization of AI in their customer service operations.
4. **Workplaces Supported by AI Solutions**: Several agencies are harnessing the power of generative AI tools for diverse applications, from graphic design to

content creation. These AI solutions are being implemented across various hierarchical levels, but are seen to provide the greatest benefits for execution-level tasks.

5. **AI for Productivity**: On an individual level, people are discovering innovative ways to employ AI to boost productivity, ultimately striving to optimize their use of time.

Each of these levels represents a unique degree of AI integration, showcasing the diversity and flexibility of artificial intelligence across numerous sectors and job roles. The escalating trend of AI adoption signifies its potential to radically transform the professional landscape. However, successful adoption and implementation of AI within an organization require certain prerequisites. Therefore, we explore these necessary conditions for effective AI adoption by organizations.

Necessary Conditions for AI Adoption.

To effectively initiate any of the aforementioned shifts towards AI integration, a conducive blend of organizational and individual mindset is paramount. These attitudes will serve as the foundational elements for the formulation of future curricula that are primed for AI readiness.

1. **Attitudes and Culture**:
    - **Openness to Change**: Adoption of AI technologies often requires a significant shift in routine practices. Both institutions and individuals need to be open and adaptable to these changes.
    - **Trust in AI**: Building trust in AI is necessary for widespread adoption. Transparency in how AI works can help foster trust.
    - **Leadership Commitment**: At the organizational level, commitment from top management is essential to drive AI initiatives.
2. **Competencies and Skills**:
    - **Technical Skills**: People need the necessary technical skills to develop, manage, and use AI technologies. This includes data science, machine learning, programming, and system integration skills.
    - **AI Literacy**: Basic understanding of AI principles and its implications, even for non-technical staff, is important.
    - **Training and Learning Resources**: Availability of organizational funds for ongoing learning and skill development in AI is critical.
3. **Technological Infrastructure**:
    - **Robust and Reliable Infrastructure**: AI requires a strong hardware and software infrastructure. High-speed internet, cloud services, servers, data storage, etc., should be available and reliable.
    - **Data Quality and Management**: AI technologies rely heavily on data. Thus, an effective data management strategy is crucial. This includes data

collection, data quality, data privacy, and appropriate data storage and retrieval systems.

4. **Environmental Factors**:
    - **Regulatory Compliance**: Regulations on data protection, privacy, AI ethics etc., need to be in place and adhered to.
    - **Market Conditions**: The competition, customer expectations, and general market trends may drive the need for AI.
5. **Economic Factors**:
    - **Cost-Benefit Analysis**: Implementing AI technologies can be expensive. Therefore, a careful cost-benefit analysis is required.
    - **Investment Capacity**: Depending on the scale, AI implementation might require substantial investment. Having the economic capacity to make such investments is crucial.
6. **Operational Factors**:
    - **Process Adaptability**: The existing processes should be adaptable to integrate AI tools.
    - **Strategy Alignment**: The AI initiatives should align with the organization's strategy and goals.

It must be pointed out that strategic alignment is possible (and more importantly, long lasting) when it is not forced; as a response to a fad or fear of missing out. It works when it emerges naturally from the needs of downstream stakeholders and competencies of those upstream. PR would be crucial in the last mile adoption of that strategy.

7. **Ethical Considerations**:
    - **Ethical AI Use**: AI should be used in a way that is ethical, without bias, and that respects privacy and human rights.
    - **Transparency and Accountability**: There should be transparency in how the AI makes decisions, and accountability mechanisms should be in place.
8. **Collaboration and Partnerships**:
    - **Partnering with AI Providers**: Organizations may need to partner with AI solution providers.
    - **Collaborative Attitude**: At a personal level, a collaborative attitude can enhance the collective learning and adoption of AI.

The first two – Attitudes and Culture, and Competencies and Skills are what academics can influence. The biggest factor of success for bringing in AI into communications curricula is how seamless is its introduction. It is most seamless when lower hanging fruits are grabbed first. And therefore, a need to map AI utilities in the order of complexity, and

return on investment. Such a map can help educators with an approach to prioritize AI education – in terms of utility of tools and the complexity of their underlying concepts.

Mapping Utility, Ease of Use, and Output Accuracy of AI Tools

I have evaluated and scored several AI applications according to their utility, ease of use, and output accuracy. I have covered 11 categories of tool, from text-to-image and text-to-video generators to AI applications in sectors like healthcare, cybersecurity, supply chain, and marketing. Also, I have examined common applications such as chatbots, predictive analytics, text analytics, speech-to-text, and image recognition. A detailed list of Tools covered within each category is provided in Appendix 1.

The scores out of five for each category are meant to reflect the general effectiveness of these applications in professional environments. The utility score evaluates the usefulness of the tool in various contexts, the ease-of-use score assesses the user-friendliness of the tool, and the output accuracy score rates how reliable and precise the output is. These scores are approximate evaluations and may vary depending on specific software implementations, the quality of the input data, and the technical proficiency of the user. AI is a rapidly evolving field and these ratings will undoubtedly change over time as the technology and its applications continue to develop and mature.

The table that follows provides a snapshot of the current state of these applications, with justifications for each score. This serves as a useful guide to help professionals make informed decisions when considering the implementation of AI tools in their work processes.

Table 1. Summary of the tools review results

Applications	Utility	Ease of Use	Output Accuracy
Text-to-Image	(4/5) Useful for quick visualisation of concepts, yet limited in broad applications	(3/5) Requires learning and understanding the input format	(4/5) Improved algorithms, but subject to input text complexity
Text-to-Video	(3.5/5) Simplifies video creation, but less versatile than manual methods	(3/5) Requires understanding of input commands and formatting	(3.5/5) Varies with input complexity and specificity
Text Analytics	(5/5) Extremely useful for extracting insights across many industries. For example: Text classification, sentiment analysis, topic analysis, language detection etc. done through	(3.5/5) Some technical knowledge required to refine results	(4.5/5) High accuracy, but dependent on quality of input data
Predictive Analytics	(4.5/5) Essential for forecasting and decision-making across industries	(3/5) Requires understanding of data and models	(4/5) Relatively high accuracy, but depends on data and model appropriateness
Chatbots	(4/5) Great for improving customer service responsiveness	(4/5) Usually easy to interact with, but backend setup can be complex	(4/5) Varies greatly depending on algorithm and training data
AI in Healthcare	(4.5/5) Potential to save lives and improve patient care, but still emerging	(2.5/5) Often requires specialist knowledge to use and interpret	(4.5/5) Generally high, but some tasks remain challenging
AI in Cybersecurity	(4/5) Enhances security efforts but limited by evolving threats	(2.5/5) Complex to implement and requires specialist knowledge	(4/5) High, but dependent on the nature of threats and system sophistication
AI in Supply Chain	(4/5) Increases efficiency and can reduce costs	(3/5) May require training and understanding of supply chain	(4/5) Generally high, but dependent on quality of input data
AI in Marketing	(4.5/5) Provides actionable insights and automates tasks	(3.5/5) Can be intuitive but output interpretation often requires knowledge	(4.5/5) High, but largely depends on the quality of input data
Speech-to-Text	(4/5) High utility in transcription, assistive technology, etc.	(4.5/5) Generally straightforward to use and improve with practice	(4.5/5) High accuracy, especially for clear and unaccented speech
Image Recognition	(4.5/5) Broad utility across many industries like healthcare, security, retail	(4/5) Generally easy to use, depending on the user interface	(4.5/5) High accuracy, but dependent on quality of input images

Framework for building AI Education

It is essential for academic institutions to adapt their curricula to equip the next generation of PR and communications professionals with the necessary AI competencies. However, to ensure a successful integration of AI into the curriculum, a well-structured approach is necessary. Here's a roadmap that institutions can follow to effectively incorporate AI competencies into their PR and communications curricula, with a special focus on reputation management, teaching methodologies, and faculty capability building:

1. **Identify Relevant AI Applications**: Given the focus on reputation management, identify how AI is used in this area. This might include AI's role in social media monitoring, sentiment analysis, predictive analytics for reputation management, personalized communication, crisis prediction, etc. Understanding these applications will help in designing a relevant curriculum.
2. **Align Learning Outcomes with Industry Needs**: Define learning outcomes that align with the current and projected needs of the PR and communications industry. This could involve consultation with industry experts or conducting surveys to understand industry trends and demands.
3. **Faculty Development**:
    - **Training**: Faculty will need specialized training to understand the application of AI in reputation management and to be able to teach it effectively. Consider organizing training sessions or workshops, possibly in collaboration with AI experts or industry professionals. The key to success here would be ample resources mobilized towards interdisciplinary approaches. Institutions must encourage and support funding and time allocated towards research projects. Ideally, the source of such funding should be from the industry, which will orient the research towards real life applications, and address crucial concerns around ethics and safety.
    - **Recruitment**: It might be necessary to recruit new faculty members with expertise in both AI and its applications in PR and communications. Given that this is an evolving field, the key challenge would be how narrow the pool is of such academics. Institutions must be ready to build systems in which academics of varying degrees of expertise on AI and communications can work together to enhance their collective knowledge.
4. **Curriculum Design**:

Theory and Practice: The curriculum should include both theoretical knowledge about AI and practical skills. For example, students should learn how AI works and also how to use specific AI tools for reputation management.

Ethics: Given the sensitive nature of reputation management, the curriculum should include a strong focus on ethics, including ethical use of AI, data privacy, and handling of misinformation.

5. **Innovative Teaching Methodologies**: Given the rapidly evolving nature of AI, consider using innovative teaching methodologies that encourage active learning and keep pace with industry changes. This might include project-based learning, case studies, simulations, and collaborative learning.
6. **Partnerships with Industry**: Develop partnerships with PR and communications firms and/or tech companies. These partners can offer guest lectures, internships, or even collaborative projects, providing students with real-world experience.
7. **Practical Exposure**: Ensure that students have ample opportunities to apply what they're learning. This might involve lab sessions where students can use AI tools, projects where they apply AI to solve real-world reputation management problems, or internships in the industry.
8. **Continuous Improvement**: Once the new curriculum is implemented, it should be regularly reviewed and updated. This involves collecting feedback from students, faculty, and industry partners and staying abreast of changes in AI technologies and their applications in reputation management

The aim should be not just to teach students about AI, but to prepare them to be leaders in applying AI to PR and communications, especially in the realm of reputation management.

Approach in India

Academia in India is poised to get ahead of the curve when it comes to AI adoption in curricula and practice. The key driver of this readiness is strong understanding of students and faculty members in technical fundamentals of programming. In addition to that, there is an increasing interest in this area. According to Coursera, Machine Learning is the most sought-after course in India and is opted for by over 3.7 million learners (Economic Times , 2021). India is the 3rd largest startup ecosystem in the world, and in 2019 alone 1,300 new tech startups were born in India, implying that there are 2-3 tech startups born every day (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Government of India, 2019). This creates the perfect stakeholder ecosystem and impetus for Academia to understand and address the needs of the industry, as well as find the right competencies which could drive research in AI. Most crucially, integration of AI into curricula is likely to be seamless, as students are in the very least receptive to the concepts, and possibly bring expertise of their own.

Conclusion

As we delve further into the era of digital transformation and artificial intelligence, the role of communications educators becomes ever more critical. They hold the key to empowering the future workforce, equipping them with the necessary competencies to harness the power of AI in the realm of Public Relations and reputation management. The onus is on these educators to not only impart knowledge about AI and its applications, but to instill in students a deep understanding of the ethical implications and responsible use of these technologies.

In the near future, successful reputation management will largely depend on efficient and responsible use of AI tools. Educators have the task of preparing their students for this new reality, turning them into capable professionals who can effectively use AI to analyze, predict, and manage public perceptions. By doing so, they will be shaping the reputation management workforce of the future, creating professionals who are not just technologically savvy, but also ethical, responsible, and forward-thinking. It's an immense responsibility, but with careful planning and commitment, it's a task that our educators are more than capable of achieving. As they undertake this mission, they will be paving the way for a future where AI is used to enhance our understanding, foster transparency, and ultimately, create a more connected and understood world.

Disclaimer

This research paper is entirely the product of human effort. No artificial intelligence (AI) tools were employed in the researching or writing process of this paper. However, it should be noted that several AI tools were tested as part of the investigation and study. These tools were used to derive insights that contributed to the findings presented within the paper.

Biography

Hemant Gaule is an education leader based in Mumbai, India, and is passionate about education, artificial intelligence, and behavioral psychology. After graduating from the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad, he has counselled several private, social, political & government initiatives. He was a Co-founder & Director of Citizens of Accountable Governance, a team that spearheaded the national election campaign of India's current Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi in 2014. After that, he has Co-founded (and is Dean of) India's only institute dedicated to education and research in Public Relations – School of Communications & Reputation. In 2019 he became the first Indian to be conferred as a Fellow Accredited Public Relations Practitioners by ASEAN PR Network. In 2022, he was named among 40 Young Turks of India by Reputation Today Magazine. He can be reached at @HemantGaule on X, formerly known as Twitter.

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Appendix 1: List of tools mapped on Utility, Ease of Use, and Output Accuracy

Applications	Tools Tested
Text-to-Image	Midjourney V5, Dall-E 2
Text-to-Video	Invideo, Synthesia
Text Analytics	ChatGPT, Bard, Notion
Predictive Analytics	MS Azure, ChatGPT
Chatbots	Zbrain, ChatGPT
AI in Healthcare	ChatGPT Plugin - Epic, Cerner
AI in Cybersecurity	Crowdstrike
AI in Supply Chain	GPT for Sheets Extension
AI in Marketing	ChatGPT, Notion, Jasper
Speech-to-Text	Pictory, tl:dv
Image Recognition	Clarifai, MS Azure

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Professional Field of Public Relations/Communications Management: ethical issues, challenges, and an attempt at a forecast

René Seidenglanz and Melanie Baier

The rapid development of artificial intelligence will have an enormous impact on various industries and professional fields. In the field of PR/communications management, too, there are numerous challenges and changes resulting from the use of AI, most recently from tools such as ChatGPT.

Beyond concrete opportunities and challenges of AI applications, there is a need to delve into the ethical and organizational consequences related to this new technology. Major technological changes never stand alone but go hand in hand with the question of how individuals, organizations and society can be empowered to find a sovereign way of dealing with such technological innovations as AI. This article therefore discusses numerous ethical issues around AI applications in PR/communications management and the changing world of communication in general. Keeping these trajectories in mind, we make an attempt to derive future developments and consequences for the professional field and in particular PR/communications units.

Ethical challenges

As outlined by Seidenglanz & Baier (2023) in this book, AI applications have a tremendous effect on the tasks and roles of PR/communications professionals.[11] However, the use of AI in PR also raises several ethical questions and issues.

PR practitioners, but also the industry, are challenged to address this, including establishing their own ethical standards for dealing with AI and potential negative consequences (AI-enabled propaganda, misinformation and disinformation, changes brought about by the democratization of data analytics and the automation of strategy and response).

To date, there have been no comprehensive PR-specific debates on the ethical challenges of AI applications. Beyond PR, however, there are intensive discussions on ethical issues (Mittelstadt et al., 2016; Tsamados et al., 2022), the core ideas of which are outlined below and are equally relevant to the field of application of PR.

Privacy

The use of AI in the PR industry requires the collection and analysis of large amounts of data. This can raise data privacy concerns. PR managers must ensure that the data collected is used ethically and in compliance with the law. It is important to be transparent with users and obtain their consent when personal data is collected, as already stated in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In addition, companies should ensure that the data collected is adequately protected and safeguarded against misuse or unauthorized access. This is where PR practitioners can and should ask the questions and collaborate with other departments to find suitable, compliant solutions.

Bias and discrimination

AI systems, e.g., chatbots like ChatGPT, learn from large data sets created by humans. If this data contains bias or discrimination, it can be reflected in the generated content. This can lead to unfair or discriminatory communication outcomes (e.g., Köchling & Wehner, 2020). PR professionals must ensure that AI algorithms and models are regularly reviewed

[11] If autonomous and adaptive algorithms are used in the data analysis process or in process execution, we speak of AI applications addressing a specific problem.

and adjusted for potential bias. In addition, it is important to consider diversity and inclusion in data sources and in teams working with AI systems to ensure fair and representative communication. Adopting reflective practice, introducing stakeholder feedback rounds or other intermediate research steps would help address these issues.

Transparency about the use of AI

Transparency must be established with respect to (1.) the data used, (2.) AI systems employed, and (3.) the results of AI applications

First, regarding the data used, it is necessary to clarify where the sources of the AI are, whether they are trusted sources or fake news, neutral sources or sources that pursue an agenda (and are therefore not neutral). In addition, as outlined above, it is important to ensure that the input data is not subject to bias.

Secondly, regarding the AI systems used, the basic features of the algorithm used should be known and it should be possible to ensure that all relevant influencing factors have found their way into the model and that the model is valid in respect to the research question (Caruana et al., 2015).

Thirdly, and this is a particular challenge in view of the increasing complexity of AI models, the results of AI applications can be made more transparent by providing the results with post-hoc explanations. For example, these explanations show which features contribute the most to a model's result or which feature values make up a specific result. Here, several methods of explainable AI ("explainable AI", XAI) are already standard in medical applications or predictive maintenance (Kraus et al., 2021; Poretschkin et al., 2021). These could also be used for PR/communication management, as XAI is dedicated precisely to the question of how AI-generated decision proposals can be visually and informatively prepared according to the requirements of AI users. With the goal of reducing complexity through simplification and user-friendly explanations of why the AI made a certain decision, XAI creates correction possibilities for humans ("human-in-the-loop") and can help increase the acceptance of AI solutions.

The use of AI in PR can lead to challenges around accountability and transparency. As Dobreva's article here shows, PR practitioners themselves struggle to identify AI generated text. So, when chatbots or other AI systems are used to communicate with the public, companies and their PR practitioners must make their use clear. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish automated and human interactions with transparent communication about the use of AI solutions and their purpose, so that no false expectations or deceptions arise (Beining, 2019).

Responsibility

The use of AI applications also raises the question of who is responsible or even liable for malfunctions or damage. This question is anything but trivial. In addition to the question of a bias-free data set on which an AI application is based, it is important to ensure that the algorithm inherent in the AI works error-free and validly. In this context, some AI models are not trained for a single application but are potentially applicable to a whole range of products and services in the sense of a "general purpose technology" (Bresnahan & Trajtenberg, 1995). This is especially true for the new generation of "foundation models" (e.g., ChatGPT) that are used "downstream" in countless concrete AI applications. The AI Act has defined extensive obligations for developers, operators, and users here, which are aimed at preventing harm to individuals and society.

Irrespective of current regulatory efforts, the concrete question for companies is how to formulate ethical guidelines and thus also assume responsibility. In its AI guidelines, for example, Deutsche Telekom has stipulated that it is clearly defined from the outset who is responsible for which AI system and which AI function: "We make sure that we clarify which initiative or product owner has which responsibilities. For partners or third parties, we define clear guidelines for when a partnership can be established. And, we declare which duties are connected to the respective AI parts" (Mackert & Kohn, 2018). While some companies are already well advanced in terms of responsible AI, the increasing proliferation of AI applications will most likely lead more and more companies to come up with their own AI guidelines.

Forecasting the changing world of communication

The emergence of AI can have consequences for PR or intensify consequences that have already become visible through social media and other forms of digitalization and automation:

Total communications output increases exponentially

Automated tools not only enable one's own organization to exponentially increase communication output. Other organizations (including their own stakeholders) are likely to do the same. As a result, organizations are faced with an exponentially higher number of communications to deal with or questions to answer.

Because PR is forced to communicate exponentially more - this can equally only be achieved through AI tools - it is possible that increased communication needs and increased performance cancel each other out.

Organizations are not only able, but they are consequently forced to communicate much more intensively because, for example, their competitors are doing the same. To achieve the same reputational success as today, an exponentially higher level of communication with correspondingly higher investments in personnel (control, analysis, etc.) and technology may therefore be necessary.

It's paradoxical but totally possible that not only will organizations be communicating more thus continuing to contribute to noise instead of listening, but they might also be paying more for it too instead of saving money or time as they might hope by adopting and implementing AI systems.

Requirements for individualized and human communication increase

The development of AI is likely to generate two partly conflicting expectations on the stakeholder side regarding individualized communication.

- ***Expectation of perfect individual responses to queries and*** *requests is* increasing because stakeholders are expecting AI systems to perform better. Organizations must therefore invest in increasingly powerful AI systems that produce the most individualized responses possible. In some cases, expectation and performance might diverge, i.e., the performance of AI systems will not keep pace with expectation. It may even be necessary to recruit more personnel to produce individualized responses.
- ***Human communication is becoming more value-driven***. Trends usually generate countertrends. People are (and will continue to be) social beings. If communication becomes more and more automated, this may result in greater demands from the stakeholders. While standard situations are increasingly characterized by automated communication, emotional, social situations require even more individualized communication, or this is demanded more strongly by the stakeholders. Perhaps human communication will also be seen as more valuable in the future - or it will be seen as a signal of appreciation. So, if organizations communicate "humanely," this can be understood as special appreciation. Conversely, the expectation of stakeholders for human communication may increase - precisely because automated communication characterizes the standard case and stakeholders want their concerns to be understood as valued.

Overall, then, the importance of personal, human communication may increase in specific situations.

Again, both trends may mean that AI systems can *multiply communication output,* but equally must maintain (if not increase) resources for human communication and intervention.

Truth and lies are increasingly difficult to identify

With AI, e.g., in image and video production, forgeries are perfectly producible in the foreseeable future, and images and videos also fail as proof of truth. Organizations and their PR are thus increasingly confronted with an environment in which messages in public are less and less bound to proof of truth and argumentation (especially in the case of corresponding attacks) is becoming more and more difficult. Opponents, conversely, can more and more easily dismiss evidence of truth as "fake news" (Kirf et al., 2020, p. 13). The threat posed to organizations by communication of lies (e.g., in shitstorms) increases exponentially.

Resources gained through automation are likely to be invested in (automated) observation and (automated) mass communication (especially their planning and adjustment by personnel) in the future. Fact-checking will become an important task for PR and communications work; here, on the one hand, profound digital media competence will be needed to identify AI-generated fake content in text and images on the basis of minimal features (Neuerer & Stiens, 2023), and on the other hand, likewise, transparent handling of artificially generated media, for example, via appropriate tagging in databases (Beuth, 2023).

Consequences for the planning of a PR/communications unit

Automation of standardized tasks/elimination of tasks

In the short and medium term, several tasks (text production, image and AV production) can be replaced by the use of AI.

Whether this will be the case in the long term - because the communication effort is growing exponentially at the same time - remains an open question.

Nevertheless, numerous tasks that are still necessary today will be eliminated and personnel consequences will be necessary.

New tasks in the use of AI and in changing organizational environments

New tasks arise from the monitoring and optimization of AI systems, the interpretation and evaluation of AI-generated data, and the strategic orientation of communication, from ethical challenges, and from the change in the meaning of human communication. In these areas, therefore, there is an additional need for personnel for strategy, planning, analysis, evaluation, interindividual communication.

In addition, changes in the communication environment (increasing complexity, increase in communication output, increased demands for face-to-face communication, truth/lie) could also necessitate an increased use of resources to offset the savings from automation.

In the forecast, then, it is unlikely that PR will require significantly fewer staff in the future; in fact, it is likely that it will require more staff.

Digital responsibility management

Responsibility and sustainability are also becoming even more relevant in view of digitalization. The digital responsibility of organizations as a new concept (where platforms, providers, customers and the supply chain play different roles) will become on the one hand the subject of PR action in the organization but also an element of responsibility or sustainability communication (at Quadriga University of Applied Sciences some of our students have been exploring the concept and its potential applications already). Even if only AI applications are used that are not classified as high-risk AI by the AI regulation, a voluntary "code of conduct" is recommended to establish transparency and trustworthiness. Numerous companies that are increasingly data-driven have defined one. The examples of Bosch, Deutsche Telekom and IBM show that this code of conduct not only addresses external stakeholders but is also directed inward in order to implement the cultural transformation.

Guidance on the implementation and realization of *trustworthy AI* as the core principle defined by the European Commission should guide the profession and PR/communications units engaging in AI applications. The guidelines include, among others, human agency and oversight, privacy and data governance, transparency, diversity, non-discrimination and fairness, societal and environmental wellbeing, and accountability (High-Level Expert Group on AI, 2019, p. 14). Existing guidelines on ethics of PR do already cover some of these aspects and should be enriched to ensure particularly human agency and oversight in the AI assisted PR work.

Competence increase, continuous training, and learning

Adapting skills and roles in PR through AI requires continuous education and a willingness to learn both about the use of AI systems and about strategic issues. It also requires an overall understanding of an increasingly complex organizational environment.

The ability to develop complex strategies, create creative content and build relationships with clients and media will continue to be critical skills that add value in the PR industry.

Skills such as strategic thinking, creativity and interpersonal communication are becoming more important - as the organizational environment becomes even more complex and, equally, stakeholder demands (including for individual communication) increase.

The pressure on PR professionals to adapt their roles and take on new responsibilities will grow. Developing a broader skillset and an agile mindset is critical.

Mindset

PR employees must not only deal with the technical realities of AI to be able to use tools optimally. This acquisition of skills is necessary but also trivial.

Much more, however, PR must also deal with the background and consequences of AI to be able to implement this in a strategically meaningful way and to be able to act professionally in an even more complex organizational environment.

This means, for example, that the sociological basis of PR (research and knowledge) must be strengthened. Equally, it also means that PR must abandon the sometimes naive "technology positivity" (see points made by Bourne and Stoeckle in this book) and adopt an overall skeptical, critical, questioning attitude (critically consider the impact and consequences of technical developments and anticipate consequences).

Transformation Management

The changing demands and roles, the loss of tasks and thereby possibly also job losses, growing complexity are challenges that must be the subject of a (permanent) transformation management of PR units.

Importance of PR in organizations

Even if communicators see the opportunities rather than the risks of digitization, current studies show that PR still cannot demonstrate a high degree of maturity regarding the digitization of either its core processes or its support processes (Zerfaß et al., 2022, p.43). The digital transformation of PR organizations is apparently unable to keep pace with the rapid technological development and its potential. Structural barriers, such as a lack of support from budget managers and corporate culture, as well as a lack of task and

process documentation, are cited as the main barriers (Zerfaß et al., 2022, p. 52). However, the latter is essential in assessing which processes need to be transformed and with what priority when building digital infrastructures of communications departments (Zerfaß & Brockhaus, 2023, p. 34). Furthermore, as explained above, the use of RPA requires defined and digitized processes.

Digital transformation is thus by no means limited to the introduction of technological tools and processes but remains at its core a holistic transformation task for organizations. This is true because technical systems change faster than social systems (Zerfaß & Brockhaus, 2023, p. 35). The sociotechnical approach shows how the subsystems of technology, people and organization can be shaped together to create digital sovereignty for individuals and organizations. Hofmann et al. (2023) derive evaluation and design criteria for contexts of action for the special requirements of AI applications that enable individuals and organizations to harness digital or AI technologies for their own purposes and to successfully pursue their own goals through competent action (Hofmann et al., 2023, p. 96). However, control and thus design of technology systems by individuals and organizations presupposes - as also called for in this article - a fundamental "digital literacy" (Adi, 2019; Hofmann et al., 2023, p. 98).

Overall, there are two main demands on the PR industry that result from the developments described:

- **PR as a competence leader in AI and communication -** With the use of AI and automation of tasks, PR could become more important in many organizations. The ability to analyze large amounts of data in real time, identify trends and develop a better understanding of target audiences can add significant value to organizations. The growing importance of AI-powered data analysis and target group understanding could lead to PR taking on a higher status in the organization and being seen as a strategic partner for management. The prerequisite for this is that PR takes on competence leadership for the use of AI in stakeholder communication (and is also granted this competence). Other organizational areas (HR, sales, etc.) will also increasingly use AI. But precisely because it is a matter of communication, PR should coordinate and bundle corresponding activities.
- **PR as strategic communication management in a more complex communication world -** As complexity of (communication) environment increases even further, holistic stakeholder communication is likely to become more important for organizations. Professional communication will become even more critical to organizational success, dangers from communication challenges are rising.

The importance of the organizational unit responsible for communication should therefore increase. The prerequisite here is also that this unit actively takes on responsibility and is also granted this by the organizational management.

Disclaimer

This article contains artificial intelligence in translating the original German article into English using DeepL. The translation provided by DeepL was double-checked by the authors to correct selected wordings and paraphrases.

Biography

Prof. Dr. René Seidenglanz is President of Quadriga University of Applied Sciences Berlin and in this position responsible for strategic guidelines and university development. He also holds a professorship in communication science at the university. The graduate communication scientist and psychologist has been working in science and education for many years. Between 2003 and 2008 he taught at the University of Leipzig in the field of PR/communication management. He was then Director of Studies at the German Press Academy and coordinated the development of the Quadriga University in Berlin. When it was founded in 2009, Seidenglanz was appointed Vice President. On January 1, 2020, he succeeded Prof. Peter Voß as President.

Dr Melanie Baier is Senior Manager Analytics & Innovation and lecturer in Data Science and Economics. She studied economics at the TU Dresden, where she also received her doctorate. Her research interest is in particular new data analysis methods for economic and business applications. In addition to her teaching activities, Dr Baier worked for several years in the field of applied innovation research and product development as part of strategic innovation projects.

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What is AI Teaching Us About Public Relations Education?

Marina Vujnovic, Lukasz Swiatek, Dean Kruckeberg, and Chris Galloway

Ever since the unveiling of the generative AI tool ChatGPT in fall 2022, (Roose, 2023) higher education institutions throughout the world have been in a frenzy to determine how best to implement and regulate the use of AI in teaching and learning. The daily bombardment of information from administrators, technology experts, professional associations, and EdTech companies has been flooding faculty inboxes with sales pitches, advice, and quick tips, increasing both faculty's curiosity and their high anxiety about these seemingly overnight changes that will affect the ways in which they will teach and the ways in which students will learn. Faculty teaching Public Relations have not been exempt from this bombardment.

As educators worldwide delve into the content of this information that calls for the transformative value of AI in education and that celebrates its potential to deliver long-sought personalized education, the narrative of this information quickly becomes clear. It is a narrative that puts profit and efficiency above human beings. That is why those in higher education should now step back and take a deep breath. As exciting as AI in higher education may appear on the surface, a deeper analysis of the corporate pitches and the many opinions that have been expressed by various publics point to obvious efforts to mold contemporary institutions into neoliberal models of higher education.

Therefore, we must examine these latest calls for the use of AI in higher education within the context of the decades-long corporate effort to bring about neoliberal models of higher education, an effort that has been supported by policymakers and venture philanthropies whose goal is to implement big data technology to create—as they argue—personalized and customized education that would eventually transform education to fit narrow, primarily economic, corporate goals (Roberts-Mahoney, Means, & Garrison, 2016). In other words, AI is now being sold as the newest technology that will finally "fix" education (Davis, Eynon, & Salveson, 202, p. 540).

This attempt to create neoliberal models of education has been playing out for a long time in primary and secondary (K-12) education, in which the implementation of technology in the classroom has been touted as a way to finally implement learning outcomes that human teachers could not possibly achieve. What has been delivered, instead, is the

weakening of our public education systems, resulting in worsening educational outcomes. In higher education, we've also seen a steady change toward the training of students as future workers rather than as citizens who are sufficiently educated to perform both their professional and civic duties (see, for example, Giroux, 2014).

In higher education in general and in Public Relations education in particular, we are gravely concerned about several ways in which AI is transforming teaching and learning. We see three interrelated concerns at play:

1) the implementation of AI technology in the classroom (AIEd);
2) educating future Public Relations practitioners to use AI tools or to be AI proficient; and
3) the impact of AI on our own profession as educators and as researchers.

We argue that the promotion of AI educational tools (AIEd) is simply the continuation of the EdTech corporate attempt to control not only the primary and secondary school public education system, but also education in general, which is viewed as a threat to neoliberal values that are economy-centered, rather than human- and environment-centered. Contemporary society is being shaped by the uncritical implementation of AI technologies in workplaces that promise more efficiency and cost savings. However, even though many (see, for example, Daugherty & Wilson, 2018) argue that AI systems will work as collaborators alongside humans, history suggests there are reasons to worry. Many blue-collar jobs have literally disappeared, and they are not coming back. It is reasonable to assume that, as AI continues to become more sophisticated, white-collar jobs will also increasingly be on the line. Already, there are plenty of examples (Swiatek et al., 2023). This issue presents a problem for educators who are charged with training the future workforce.

Public Relations education is in turmoil, as its curriculum over the past few decades has steadily moved toward a focus on technical skill rather than toward a broadening of students' historical, cultural, and critical competencies. Public Relations education has also become more business-oriented, and many programs now find themselves in business schools or faculties, rather than in faculties of arts, humanities, and social sciences. With this close relationship to business and with Public Relations assuming a business, rather than a communication, function, we might be relinquishing the opportunity to criticize business, as Adi (2019) has pointed out. Public Relations' closeness to the corporate sphere in the use and adoption of AI, a trend that Public Relations educators are encouraging in many ways, has been criticized by Bourne (2019), who argues that Public Relations educators must re-think their cheerleading approach to AI. Undoubtedly, Public Relations professional practice has supported the view that AI is a gleaming opportunity to change the world, albeit with very little consideration for potential adverse outcomes. We should teach our students to question such assumptions.

In the educational sphere, AI is now seen as a new opportunity to advance the sort of corporate school reform that Roberts-Mahoney, Means, and Garrison (2016, p. 406) define "as an interrelated set of post-welfare, neoliberal policy initiatives that situate market competition and business management as the key to educational improvement". A perfunctory search engine exercise researching education and AI yields nearly 2 billion hits, and those at the top of this list clearly use the same discourse that corporate school reformists have used for decades, promising efficiency and a high level of personalization at an exponential level. For example, Sal Kahn, the CEO and Founder of the Khan Academy, said for *Forbes*:

We're at the cusp of using AI for probably the biggest positive transformation that education has ever seen…And the way we're going to do that is by giving every student on the planet an artificially intelligent but amazing personal tutor. And we're going to give every teacher on the planet an amazing, artificially intelligent teaching assistant (Phillips, 2023).

This type of "transformation", featuring personal tutors and teaching assistants, is just one part of the larger corporate school reform being undertaken around the world.

For us in higher education – faculty members who used to think that we were amazing, intelligent teaching assistants when we were working on our advanced degrees – Kahn's statement might come with a bit more skepticism, especially when research shows that, in this new educational setting in which students work in technology-saturated environments, "teachers are largely reduced to facilitators and data analysts, placing the expertise driving the educational process in the power of algorithms and their creators" (Roberts-Mahoney, Means & Garrison, 2016, p. 407), further reducing their expertise as "professional [workers] with specialized knowledge and independent judgment" (p. 414). The result of such an educational system that undermines teaching expertise and that gives algorithms educational authority results in a mechanistic, corporate view of education as the transfer of primarily technical skills. As Roberts-Mahoney, Means, and Garrison (2016, p. 411) found in their analysis of monographs, advocacy papers, and various educational policies, a unified narrative had emerged of the purpose of education being a means to "augment human capital and train workers to develop twenty-first-century skills".

This is the context in which global neoliberal capitalism worldwide is driving policies that further technologize both teaching and learning. Undoubtedly, technology can have a positive impact on learning and can benefit society-at-large; however, as Roberts-Mahoney, Means, and Garrison (2016, p.418) have argued, once technology is combined with "narrow neoliberal market imperatives in education", the educational technology experiment is likely to fail and, moreover, "likely to do far more harm than good". This is why we would urge a strong dose of caution and selectivity over a frenzied embrace, as well as experimentation, when it comes to the use of AI in Public Relations education.

Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2021), in their analysis of neoliberal approaches to Public Relations education that prioritize instrumental skills over value-laden education, called for a paradigm shift toward more historically, ethically, and critically grounded Public Relations education—arguing that narrow technical skills that are being taught are disadvantaging, rather than advantaging, students who choose to pursue a degree in Public Relations. With AI that can already perform many of the technical skills on which our curricula are built, there is a sense of crisis—albeit self-created crisis, we would argue—that explains why many in academia are rushing to implement AI tools in their courses.

This is why we must take a broader view of what technology tools mean for Public Relations education. We need to consider the socio-economic and cultural impacts of these tools before we indiscriminately invite them into our educational homes. As we have written elsewhere (Swiatek et al., 2023), AI in Education (AIEd) is a movement rather than just a set of AI tools to be used in educational settings. This movement is a part of a neoliberal university system having a similar ideology to that of corporate school reform, and it is often promoted by the same corporate and venture philanthropy social actors who oppose the historically progressive university agenda. Vujnovic and Foster (2022) have analyzed the ways in which EdTech and global education entrepreneurs have used the recent pandemic to promote more technology in higher education as part of a long-term neoliberal agenda that aims—through the use of personalized education technology—to move "curricular, pedagogical, and assessment decisions … from the public school settings [or teachers and faculty in general] to private providers of commercial technology and digital learning platforms" (Roberts-Mahoney, Means, & Garrison, 2016, p. 417).

As Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2021) have argued for Public Relations education, and as Vujnovic and Foster (2022) have argued for higher education in general, a corporate agenda in higher education has been evident for years through the so-called experiential learning that was an outgrowth of the lack of corporations' investment in training their own workforces. Similarly, the lack of investment in public education has been compensated by the push by private entities, including by technology companies, to capitalize on public dollars. As the rapid advancement in AI technology suggests, skills—especially technical, but even those that are creative—are no longer "robot-proof", as Aoun (2017) would say. It is evident, as technology gurus are telling us, that it is impossible to predict AI development and to project what the future of work might look like in 20, 15, 10, or even the next five years.

This situation presents an impossible task for educators, who are supposed not only to teach with the newest cutting-edge technologies, but also to prepare students to use these technologies. However, no clear evidence suggests that the use of AI in the classroom will, in fact, enhance student learning and will better prepare students for their

future work, in which many of the skills that are being taught are, ironically, becoming quickly obsolete or, rather, being taken over by so-called "intelligent" machines. What Roberts-Mahoney, Means, and Garrison (2016, p. 417) beautifully point out is that personalized technology does not actually improve education. In fact, as they say in relation to their analysis of vast amounts of documents and reports, "…none of the reports offered concrete proof that personalized learning technology delivers a more robust and nuanced understanding of students than those held by experienced teachers."

This is why we also see this effort to implement AI in higher education as a way to undercut the role of the professoriate in both the classroom and in shared governance, an issue about which we are gravely concerned. As in K-12 education, the implementation of technology in the classroom usually means that decisions that were, in the past, relegated to teachers tend to be transferred to administration and, in this case, also to the tech companies and "intelligent" systems themselves. The push for technology as the classroom authority par excellence, as Vujnovic and Foster (2022) have written, is also a part of the longstanding process of the de-professionalization of the faculty (Gerber, 2010). For this reason, we believe that Public Relations faculty should, first and foremost, employ a critical approach when it comes to introducing AI or any other EdTech product into their own classrooms.

This approach means that they consider their own professional standing within the university, and we mean that collectively, that is, as one body and not as individual faculty members; this is because consequences do impact the professoriate as a collective. Many, and potentially all, shared-governance issues and labor issues are—and will be—impacted by AI. Faculty should organize, preparing a strategy to combat adverse effects on their professional standing and on their jobs. Furthermore, Public Relations faculty should not only consider what AI tools to employ, but also understand and teach the socio-cultural and economic effects of these technologies on society, including their environmental effects. As we have argued elsewhere (Swiatek et al., 2023) faculty should argue for a human-centered approach to teaching and learning that considers the impacts on humans and on the environment beyond any managerial and profit-making interests of the corporate tech industry.

Furthermore, as we write elsewhere (Swiatek et al., 2023), the personalization of education will further erode the relationship between faculty and students; this is because the focus will be on the individual learner, often turned toward each student's interaction with the technology, even when faculty and their students are both physically in the classroom. This process, in itself, erodes the academic community and our understanding of our own diversity and of one another as human beings. That is why we believe, as Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2021) have argued, that students are in dire need of academic instruction that would teach them an ethical, critical, and historical depth of the discipline of Public Relations and that would provide a strong theoretical foundation for the practice.

Public Relations has had diversity issues for years that we seemingly are unable to fix. According to the 2022 data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics over 80 percent of Public Relations practitioners in the US identify as white, and in the UK, according to the 2021CIPR State of the Profession Report, over 90 percent of Public Relations practitioners identify as white (Sogbanmu, 2022). The question remains: Are we teaching future Public Relations practitioners the importance of diversity and are we adequately contextualizing this issue in various geographical locations and within various social systems?

Those issues will become even more important with AI systems that analyze flawed, often racially, socioeconomically biased data, and that seemingly provide solutions to problems that Public Relations professionals should consider. As educators, we must teach about AI and must demonstrate its potential, but we must also recognize the limitations of its use. AI can be an extremely helpful tool when it comes to analyzing vast amounts of data; however, the results of these analyses need to be interrogated with a critical mind, and AI should not be taken as the be-all-and-end-all that it is often presented to be. Perhaps the best explanation of what AI does comes from Scott Cambo, who runs the AI incident database: “Part of the challenge is that a lot of these systems, like ChatGPT and LLaMA are being promoted as good sources of information…But the underlying technology was not designed to be that” (Hsu, 2023, para. 28). For future Public Relations practitioners, this explanation is key to understanding AI.

Public Relations must understand what is a source of information and what is not, and its practitioners must understand that large language models—that is, current generative AI systems—are not sources of information. Furthermore, the systems are often inaccurate, can hallucinate, according to the industry, but we could say rather that it is an ultimate tool for plagiarism, and therefore it cannot be considered to be reliable. Also, large language generative models are only one type of AI tool, and many AI tools are already being heavily used in Public Relations especially amongst PR agencies (Yan, 2023) and in related fields such as advertising and journalism. More advanced technologies are continually being developed. We do not argue against the implementation of any of these tools in any educational setting by any educator who chooses to teach with those tools; however, there still is great, competent education that is being undertaken that is not driven by the latest technology tools.

Although we have been informed that AI can do it all, even mimicking the Socratic dialogue by offering prompts, we argue for a human-centered approach in which the majority of classroom interaction is with—and about—humans. Indeed, considering Cambo’s aforementioned argument (Hsu, 2023), we could ask: For what is this underlying technology designed in the first place? Clearly, it is designed to create efficiency whenever possible and to replace human labor as the largest cost on the corporate balance sheet. AI might be Big Tech’s playground; however, for most workers today in any

industry, including Public Relations practitioners, and especially all of those who work in the content creation field, AI is a real threat to their livelihoods.

The future Public Relations practitioners we are now educating must be made aware of the ways in which EdTech has already played a role in moving education and students away from democratic principles and civic engagement. EdTech has moved from being a vehicle of public good to a vehicle for private interest. Students must be made aware that they, themselves, are becoming "assets—private property—of database creators and education technology vendors" (Roberts-Mahoney & Garrison, 2015, p. 40). As such, these students are themselves becoming products and, as Roberts-Mahoney, Means, and Garrison (2016, p. 417) point out, "products have no claim, no rights", a situation which they say presents a threat to the very notions of both private and public citizenry.

Finally, it is particularly important for future Public Relations practitioners to learn through their education that Public Relations practitioners have played a significant role in the development of these current issues during the past 40 years by framing the language of neoliberalism and sharing responsibility for the weakening of the democratic political system in the United States and elsewhere (Demetrious, 2022). In large part, communication technologies, social media platforms, and now AI continue to affect both the democratic system and real democratic participation adversely. Public Relations programs, as a part of the larger neoliberal university system (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000), have decreased the number of research and tenure track faculty and have hired practitioners, usually with no tenure protections, to teach practical skills.

While practical skills are important, higher education demands a system that can and must be critical of social phenomena, processes, actions, and actors. The development of AI is a stark reminder that we must resist the bandwagon mentality that embraces every technological innovation in the classroom, even when technology "favors reductionism" and is "anti-relational and anti-intellectual" (Roberts-Mahoney, Means, & Garrison, 2016, p. 417). Our students will likely learn about, and how to use, many of the AI tools before they even set foot in our classrooms. What they will not know, however, is how to interrogate these tools critically in the larger socio-economic and cultural context. We should teach them to contextualize technologies within society and to analyze whether those technologies can help alleviate or create various types of inequalities. We should also teach students to embrace only those technologies that address inequalities and injustices and to reject those that create and amplify these inequalities and injustices, regardless of how much corporate profit such technologies might generate. Public Relations educators must advocate less for the EdTech industry; instead, they must model a critical approach to tech industry products powered by AI, a critical approach that their students must emulate when they become practitioners.

Disclaimer

No AI tools have been used for the ideation or for the writing of this chapter.

Biography

Lukasz Swiatek lectures in the School of the Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney. His research in communication and media studies focuses on professional communication, as well as the implications of developments in various technologies on communities, organizations, and communicators

Chris Galloway is a senior lecturer at Massey University in the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing. Chris has many years of experience as a journalist and senior Public Relations specialist to his academic interests in issue, risk and crisis communication.

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Dean Kruckeberg, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, is co-author of the books "Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory;" "This Is PR;" and "Transparency, Public Relations, and the Mass Media." He has been presented the NCA Lifetime Achievement Award for Contributions in Public Relations Education, the PRSA Atlas Award for Lifetime Achievement in International Public Relations, was PRSA national "Outstanding Educator," and was awarded the Jackson Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Research Prize and the IPR Pathfinder Award. He was co-chair of the Commission on Public Relations Education for 15 years. Dr. Kruckeberg was awarded the 2021 PRSA Gold Anvil for Lifetime Achievement in Public Relations.

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A ChatGPT synopsis to this book:

In a world where Artificial Intelligence is no longer just a buzzword, the realm of Public Relations and Communications stands at a crossroads. From the silver screens of Hollywood to the boardrooms of tech giants, AI has captured imaginations and headlines. But how does it truly impact the PR industry? Dive into a comprehensive exploration that delves deep into the challenges, opportunities, and ethical dilemmas posed by AI. With contributions from leading professionals, educators, and academics, this book offers a panoramic view of AI's current role in PR and its potential future implications. From understanding the technical intricacies to grappling with ethical challenges, this book is a must-read for anyone navigating the dynamic landscape of PR in the age of AI. Discover the legacy that today's choices will leave for tomorrow.