

Humans needed, more than ever

An analysis of the use of AI in PR and
the impact on public relations work



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Overview of this report

The goal of this report is two-fold:

- to characterise the level of human displacement on the practice of public relations, and
- to provide practitioners and managers pathways to learn how to use artificial intelligence tools and how to govern the use of AI.

Through our research we now better understand which tasks have been replaced or assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, by how much, and why non-users are reluctant to adopt AI or automation innovations. However, the practice of public relations is not only the sum of all tasks performed. That is just one dimension of our work. Other dimensions include our advisory role and our contribution to defining and protecting purpose and strategy and our preoccupation with reputation and ensuring ethical behaviour. It also involves non-linear and uniquely human activities such as creative and critical thinking, empathizing, exercising judgement and coaching others in a way that is tailored to their individual needs.

To ensure we have addressed the full scope and role of public relations practice, we have used the Global Capability Framework¹ as a template to see where AI has penetrated the profession most and where the human element remains vital and strong. The framework was in development in 2018 at the time when we first examined the impact that AI was having on the profession.

The picture that is emerging is of a profession that is now:

- *assisted* by AI - doing those often repetitive or basic tasks that take time and which an intelligent assistant can do well. It allows us to be more *efficient* because we can use tools that are fast, accurate and can undertake work at scale.
- *augmented* by AI - doing tasks that we would find difficult to do, such as finding patterns in data, or completing comprehensive search. It allows us to be more *effective* because it enables us to do things that we would find impossible or too resource intensive to complete.

This leads to an opportunity for us to shift focus to a more strategic role where we are not only using these tools effectively, but we are:

- *advising* on governance issues about the ethical use of AI and the regulatory issues which surround it. This positions us as reputational *authorities* as organisations and governments are held *accountable* for the use of AI.

Five years ago, the question was 'Would AI take our jobs?'. Today, despite the veritable frenzy of tool development and offers, there is little evidence that wholesale job replacement is underway - yet. What is happening is low level or entry level tasks, some of them large, are being displaced. For example, if ten years ago a major task was to physically cut news articles and assemble a package for daily review, today this has been replaced by automated tools and most likely augmented with social media monitoring, sentiment analysis and journalist/influencer tracking and analysis.

¹ Gregory, A. and Fawkes, J. (2019). A Global capability framework: Reframing public relations for a changing world. *Public Relations Review*. 45(3), Article 101781 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.05.002>

The evidence is that this transformation is taking place slowly, but we can expect it to accelerate. There are AI tools that can be used for higher level tasks such as sophisticated data analysis and content creation. However, they are not yet being widely adopted, despite forward momentum in their uptake. Indeed, survey after survey indicates a low take up with more rapid progress being stalled by job anxiety and fears about new technology. Yet it is inevitable: Public relations will have to accelerate adoption of AI and automation tools, especially those which offer a productivity boost.

We have used AI tools to assist us in writing this report for some of the visuals and have indicated where we have done this for transparency.

We are listing authors alphabetically because all three contributed equally to this report. We are grateful to Andrew Bruce-Smith, Stephen Waddington, Stuart Bruce, and Martin Waxman for reviewing our work and providing feedback. Andrew used Claude 2 to provide some feedback.

Anne Gregory, Jean Valin, Swati Virmani.
September 2023

Executive summary

We can now state that most public relations jobs are being infused with AI and automation tools. However, we are not seeing job replacement. Rather we are seeing task execution becoming more efficient and effective. If jobs are being affected, it is because upskilling is required.

Humans needed more than ever

Casual use of AI, particularly ChatGPT, without oversight by humans can be catastrophic. That is why we still need to steer the ship and not let software run unsupervised. Indeed, humans are needed more than ever to govern the use of AI tools, avoid the ethical pitfalls inherent with many of them, such as bias and hallucination, and to provide guidance to organisations using these technologies.

Our research shows that on average up to 40% (36.8%) of tasks performed by public relations professionals are assisted by AI tools, although it should be borne in mind that not all public relations work can be reduced to 'tasks'. While that figure may seem low given the hype in the AI market, it also indicates that respondents are not aware of the range of tools available for some of the tasks we had identified.

The degree of AI assistance for each task varies from 20% to 60% on average. For example, data analytics and social media management have a higher average degree of assistance by AI tools, 53.4% and 53.7% respectively. Conversely, managing partnerships has a much lower degree of assistance (13.4%) on average. No task has been 100% replaced by AI. Some activities, such as managing staff and coaching and applying ethical principles have almost zero AI assistance. And that points to a truth that the more human focused our role is, the less AI can assist us. Individual or task-based work is amenable to AI. Work that requires judgement, a consideration of context, human empathy and nuanced ethical judgement is neither reducible to defined tasks, nor amenable to AI.

We are seeing evidence that adoption of AI tools and automation technology is slow and incremental, but the pace is growing. Currently the use of AI tools is primarily deployed in 'safe' ethical areas such as measurement and evaluation, monitoring and analysis of sentiment, insights into behaviours, workflow, and internal communication. However, the uses to which their outputs are used have ethical implications. Content creation is where AI tools can provide tremendous efficiencies, but it is less ethically safe. It requires care and judgement to be exercised on issues such as copyright, impersonation, the blurring of boundaries between the real and unreal, the veracity of 'facts, and all this increases risks to reputational damage.



Image generated using Midjourney. /prompt: Mona Lisa painting

Responses also indicate some reticence to adopt based on a low level of understanding of AI. The tools look great, but they are powerful, so what are we releasing? The AI tools vendors would benefit from higher transparency in explaining how their tools are built, what data they utilise and how they operate.

One clear finding from the survey and interviews in this research is that respondents see AI tools as just that. They are tools. Strategy remains the domain of human judgement, although tools like data analysis can be employed to aid strategic decision-making. A major benefit of using AI tools to increase efficiency is that the time released can be used to be 'more strategic'.

The arrival of AI at scale in our profession and in society gives us an oversight role as advisors to organisations about AI. Therefore, we must ensure we develop the professional capabilities to play that role well. It also opens up potential new types of jobs and specialisms such as prompt engineering, which are discussed in the report.



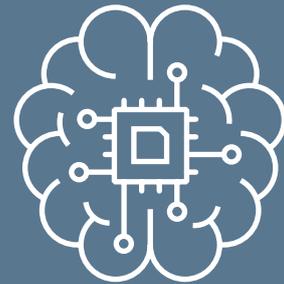
This half of the image was created with AI generative fill, using the real photographic right hand portion for reference.
Tool used: Adobe Photoshop 25 (Beta)

This half is the real photographic image.

Background

In our 2018 'Humans still needed'² research we analysed the impact of AI tools on public relations skills. We estimated that to be 12%, rising to a potential 38% by 2023. The report found that while technology was transforming the profession, human skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence were still highly valued and in demand. It also highlighted the need for public relations professionals to have a strong understanding of technology and data analytics to remain competitive in the communications sector. As a result, the CIPR encouraged public relations practitioners to embrace new technologies and invest in their own skills and professional development.

The 2018 projection that by 2023, 38% of skills would be affected by AI was just about spot on. As of August 2023, we have found that up to 40% of all public relations activities are assisted by AI.



² Valin, J. (2018). Humans Still Needed. London: Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available at https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR/_AI_in_PR_guides.aspx

Adoption of AI within public relations

In February 2023 the Public Relations Communications Association (PRCA) International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) survey³ found that only 15% of public relations professionals were using ChatGPT, 29% rarely used it and 45% never used it, with 25% saying they never plan to use it. A May 2023 PR week UK survey⁴ found that only 23% used AI tools within agencies, but by June 2023, the same survey found that 57% were using AI tools within agencies. As with the arrival of the internet in the 1990's, public relations professionals are slow to adopt new technologies. It now appears that a tipping-point has been reached.

In February 2023, the CIPR's AlinPR Panel reported that⁵ almost 6,000 AI tools are available to public relations professionals. At the time of writing, hundreds of new AI tools are being launched each week and it is impossible to keep up with developments and/or test the veracity of the products entering the market. Late 2023 is a development wild west with little regulatory control.

Some of the uses of tools include:

- *research and data analysis* such as identifying journalists' topic preferences and analysing large amounts of audience data for purchasing and channel preferences, use of chatbots to collect and analyse data
- *search* such as keyword searches, video footage for themes and SEO
- *transcription and summarisation* of meetings, conference calls and of large documents
- *content creation* such as automatic writing of press releases and feature copy, blog posts, social media updates, text to audio and text to video
- *audience identification and optimisation* such as social media use and management, CRM systems and use of chatbots for data collection and customer experience optimisation

- *channel identification and distribution*, for example of press materials and stakeholder information
- *monitoring and evaluation*, for off and on-line media to provide insights and sentiment analysis across multiple platforms, demographics, and campaign performance
- *relationship management* with influencers, assist in crisis communications, monitor threats to organisations
- *programme and campaign development and management* including campaign planning and optimisation, workflow management, budget, and timeline management

³ ICCO (2023). Global Confidence Tracker. London: ICCO/PRCA Available at <https://newsroom.iccopr.com/images/icco-confidence-tracker-feb-2023-sm2-tw-2713320>

⁴ PR Week (2023). Half of PR creative chiefs already use AI for campaign generation. Available from https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/CIPR_Artificial_Intelligence_in_PR_panel.aspx

⁵ Waddington, S. & Smith, A.B. (2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and the impact on public relations (PR) practice. London: Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available from https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/CIPR_Artificial_Intelligence_in_PR_panel.aspx

This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives an idea of the range of AI tools available to support public relations efforts. Most of these tools will save time while having a low risk ethical profile because they are about automation and contain limited AI. They offer ‘point solutions’, that is they perform a specific task and once the task is done (for example, identifying optimum media channels) they cease their function. The newer generative AI tools combine tasks such as identifying audiences and generating content. They can be set an objective, then determine for themselves the means to achieve those objectives, set themselves tasks, complete them, review whether the objective is being met, reset tasks and so on until the objective has been met. These ‘Intelligent agent’ AI tools have a high ethical risk attached to them given they will take several decisions along the way to achieving the desired objective. Their aim is to achieve the objective and they don’t calibrate their decisions against an ethical compass without specific and comprehensive instruction.

Most AI tools are not ‘intelligent’ because they are not sentient, aware of the context, nor intelligent. ChatGPT does not think. It relies on a dataset to offer an approximate surrogate content that can range from passable to excellent, from fact to fiction. In other words, good or poor content depends on the data sets used and the algorithms applied to them. ChatGPT-based tools are predictive in that, like automated translation software, they anticipate what words should come after other words based on an analysis of large data sets (now of the whole web) of how words and phrases are combined. Professor Emily Bender (2021) calls these tools ‘stochastic parrots’⁶ because they can put together apparently realistic sequences of words without understanding their meaning at all. Humans must intervene, edit, cross-check sources and verify assertions – a time consuming task.

We re-affirm that fundamental human traits which require sentient intelligence such as empathy, humour, judgment, the intangible value of relationships, the nuanced interpretation of context, and strategy development with humans in mind, cannot and, even if AI tools are available to assist, should not be surrendered to AI tools.

The ethical dimension of AI use is huge. There are big questions such as the power such technologies give to those with the resources to use them. If a government can collect data on its citizens at scale and controls certain aspects of their lives, then the surveillance and control of society is a reality. At a more practical public relations use level, there are legal issues to consider. If existing databases of words and images are used, whose copyright is the output of the tool? Are you liable for harms done by content generated by AI? And is the risk worth it if mistakes are made?

AI ethics are complex. Some tools are *inherently* ethically neutral, and they tend to perform simple tasks: they add up faster, analyse given data more accurately, create spreadsheets etc. Some are inherently ethically problematic. For example, they have in-built biases because they rely on incomplete data sets or are programmed to give weight to certain factors. Sifting entry level CVs using AI is an example where there could be inherent ethical issues. It would seem reasonable that intelligent agents that can assign themselves new tasks should be transparent about how they accomplish their tasks to expose any bias or failure to consider ethical issues.

Then there is the issue of how the *results* of the AI are used. Who is favoured or disadvantaged? For example, will AI programmed to detect an individual’s propensity to acquire a certain disease so that they can be treated effectively also mean that these people are unable to obtain insurance?

AI can be used to spread misinformation and disinformation at scale which ultimately leads to a society where trust is challenged.

The ethical issue of what ‘weight’ is given to AI systems is important. ‘The data tells us so’ should not be the sole basis of decision-making. It is here that human judgement comes in: just because we can, doesn’t mean we should.

Consult the [CIPR 2020 Ethics guide to AI in PR⁷](#) for help on these issues.

⁶ Bender, E. M.; Gebru, T.; McMillan-Major, A. & Shmitchell, S. (2021). On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency. FAccT ’21. New York, NY, USA: Association for Computing Machinery: 610–623. doi:10.1145/3442188.3445922. ISBN 978-1-4503-8309-7. S2CID 232040593

⁷ Valin, J., and Gregory A. (2020) Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in PR. London: Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Available at https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR/_AI_in_PR_guides.aspx

How we did our research

To determine actual use by public relations professionals, we first partnered with Purposeful Communications, PRovoke Media, the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO), the Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications (AMEC), and the World Communications Forum Association (WCFA).

The Global CommTech Report⁸ survey closed on March 31st, 2023. It had 329 participants from across the world.

Most participants in the Global CommTech survey were split evenly between agency (41%) and in-house (40%). More than half (56%) of public relations professionals globally believe they are extremely competent or competent in their use of communications technology, and 60% thought themselves competent in identifying and adopting new technology. This contrasts with the number who are failing to use even quite basic automation tools in their work.

Time efficiency (88%) and cost efficiency (66%) are seen as the two main benefits of using communications technology, but many practitioners still lack understanding of how technology can improve their work for clients. For instance, just over half (55%) recognise the ability of AI to authenticate the accuracy of information and just 53% recognise the usefulness of AI and analytics in modeling and predicting possible outcomes.

Top uses of technology are for media and social monitoring (60%), followed by collaboration (51%), content creation (50%) and media databases (48%).

The largest opportunity was seen as analytics and data (95%) while the largest threat is cyber security and privacy (39%).

The most important emerging skills are measurement and evaluation (78%), followed by data science and analytics (71%), behavioural insights (69%), video and image creation (51%).

Most likely areas for increased investments were data and analytics (60%), content creation (53%), and AI (39%).

Only 39% of respondents thought they had a solid understanding of ethics in using AI.

The research commissioned specifically for this report used a supplementary quantitative survey (41 respondents) and qualitative research (18 interviews) as well as the practitioner literature to quantify and characterise the level of use of AI tools in public relations.

Building on the Global Comm Tech research, we asked ChatGPT tool Aomni – an autonomous generative AI - to list all the public relations tasks that have been assisted or replaced by AI. From our own knowledge, and with reference to the practitioner literature, we added more common tasks to the list to create the survey to quantify the level of human displacement for each of them. We do not claim this list is comprehensive, but these are the tasks agreed by participants as the most common. All the tasks, along with a brief description, are listed in Table 1 on the following page.

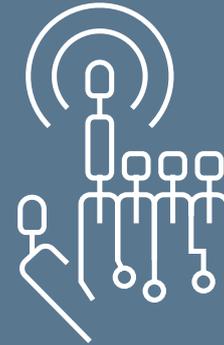
⁸ Purposeful Relations (2023). Global CommTech Report 2023. Available from <https://www.purposefulrelations.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Purposeful-Relations-Global-CommTech-Report-2023.pdf>

| Tasks and description | | |
|---|--|--|
| Data Analytics Collecting and analysing data from various sources to identify trends and track the effectiveness of public relations campaigns. | Speech-to-Text Technology Transcribing interviews, capturing notes and ideas, and creating content more efficiently through dictation. | Communication Enhancement Tailoring messages to specific audiences using AI-powered tools that analyse data and provide insights on preferences and interests. |
| Pitch Crafting Using AI-assisted tools to craft pitches and increase the chances of earning media coverage. | Media Monitoring and Relations Monitoring media coverage, identifying influencers, and creating personalised content for journalists. | Campaign Optimisation Providing recommendations for campaign improvements based on data analysis. |
| Automated Press Release Distribution Distributing press releases to relevant media outlets using AI. | Transcription Transcribing audio and video interviews and searching for keywords in podcasts or press conferences. | Keyword Search Searching for keywords in text, audio, and visual productions. |
| Video Footage Analysis Analysing video footage of events to identify critical moments or themes. | Crisis Management (i) Identifying potential issues and crises based on data. | Crisis Management (ii) Providing strategic recommendations for managing crisis communications. |
| Social Media Management (i) Identifying influencers and networks. | Social Media Management (ii) Creating social media content, schedule posts. | Social Media Management (iii) Monitoring online conversations and sentiment. |
| Content Creation Curating and creating content, such as brainstorming creative ideas, creating rich media content, and writing preliminary press releases and articles. | Workflow Recording minutes, preparing summaries, translating, canvassing, and scheduling meetings. | Research and/or Analysis Conducting public opinion research, analysing data. |
| Planning Planning programmes and campaigns, including timescales and budgets. | Measurement and Evaluation Providing measurement and evaluation metrics and impact measures. | Partnerships Develop partnerships and establish or maintain relationships. |

Table 1. List of tasks and description

What tasks have been replaced or assisted by AI?

We asked to what degree each task has been either assisted or replaced by AI tools. To complete our picture of the profession, we should add activities where there are no recognised AI tools, although such tools can be used to inform them. For example, acting as an adviser, contextual and ethical analysis, judgement, strategy development, reputation management, relationship development, human resource management and development, personal development, and maintenance of competence. These activities are among the broader capabilities of practitioners and cannot be reduced to the level of tasks. In recognition of this, we used the Global Capability Framework to show the full range of public relations work. This framework is the internationally recognised benchmark for scoping the profession and adopted by professional associations worldwide⁹.



⁹ Global Alliance (2023). Global Capability Framework. Available at <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/capabilitiesframeworks>

Survey results

Respondents were split about evenly between those who use AI tools personally and those who use and manage people who use AI tools. Out of the 21 tasks identified and performed regularly by public relations professionals, on average, almost 40% (36.8%) have assistance by an AI tool. Keep in mind that the practice of public relations is not just the sum of all tasks performed.

Looking at the median value, which is the midpoint where half responses are lower and half responses higher and where most responses tend to be clustered, is interesting. For tasks where the degree of assistance lies between 10% and 70%, the highest is for Social Media Management (iii) (70%) and lowest for Video Footage Analysis (10%) and Crisis Management (ii) (10%).

For Partnerships the median was 0%, showing that most respondents suggested no assistance from AI is required for managing partnerships. None are assisted by more than 70%, which indicates that even though tasks can be automated, a degree of oversight, editing or fact-checking is still required. Frequency of use varied between those who use it daily (40%), weekly (32%) and 15% use tools once a month (Appendix 4). Figure 3 (below) provides the median results for all 21 tasks.

The figure consists of 21 axes, each corresponding to a specific task. The scale on each axis (starting from inside to the outside) ranges from 0% to 70% and represents the median percentage values. The red coloured spike represents a median value of 60% or higher, and blue represents a median value 50% or lower.

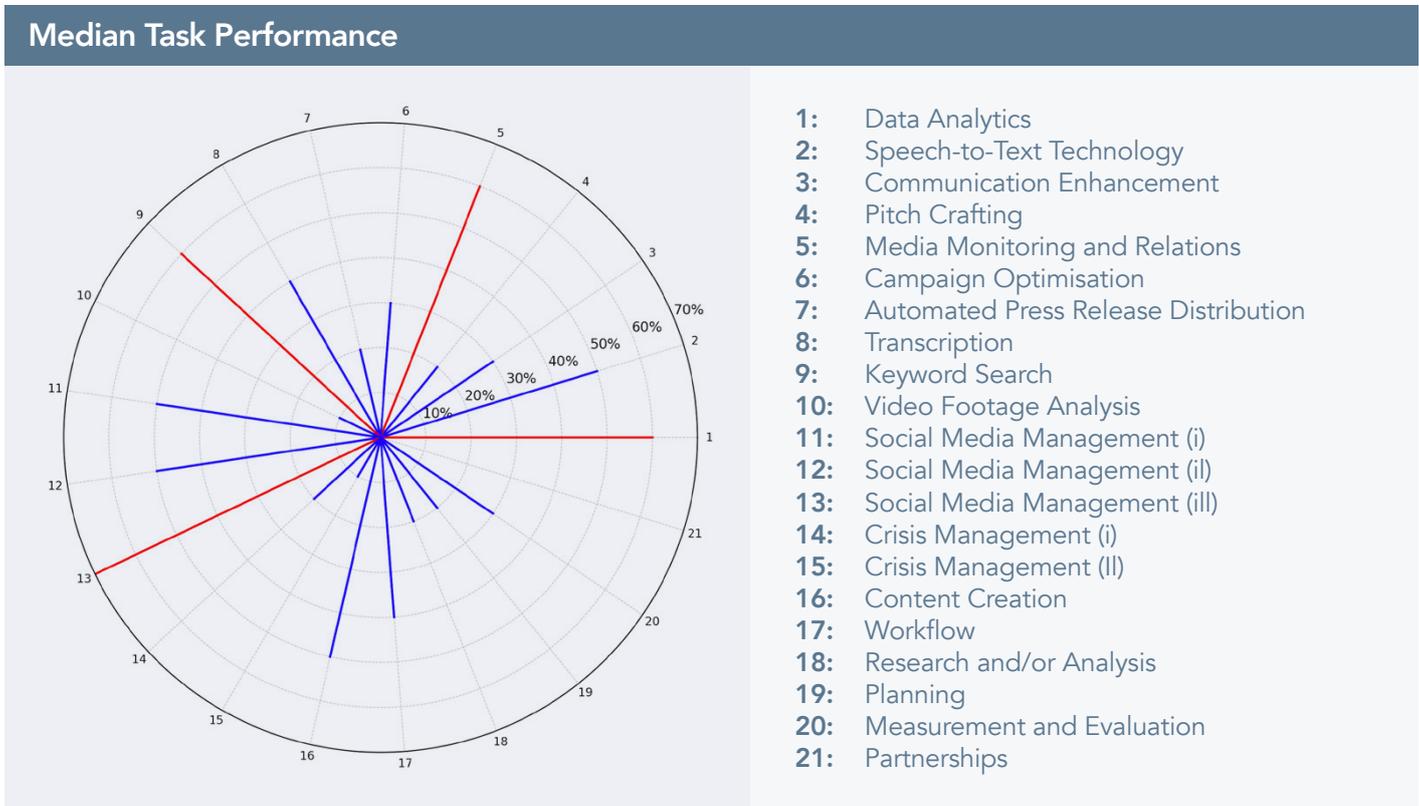


Figure 3. Median scores for the 21 tasks (tool used to create the figure - ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis)

In depth interviews

To dig deeper into the actual use of AI tools in the workplace, we conducted 18 interviews with 14 experienced users and four nonusers. Out of these 12 were senior-level practitioners, five were mid-level and one junior-level.

The goal was to better understand which current tasks or skills have been replaced or assisted by AI tools, by how much and why non-users are reluctant to adopt AI or automation tools. It also helped us predict any potential displacement of jobs in public relations. We used an AI tool (Fireflies AI) to transcribe and summarise our interviews.

Adoption of AI tools has accelerated after the introduction of ChatGPT, but they are still not widely used. There is an expectation that adoption will increase to 50% within three years.

The reluctance to adopt AI tools appears most likely because of fear that technology could replace jobs and lack of confidence in using tools like ChatGPT which are error prone. The challenges around responsible use of AI, the lack of legal clarity and absence of regulation are additional barriers to adoption. The biggest challenge appears to be keeping up with changes and the avalanche of new tools.

Respondents who used AI tools stated that they enabled them to be between 15% to 25% more productive. Some of the more frequent users of AI estimated time saved on some tasks at 70% to 75%. Most tools available are automating time consuming activities, they have zero ethical risks and are largely free of errors and therefore require minimal oversight. These figures indicate the industry has an opportunity to be at least 15% more productive, yet take-up is still slow. When asked what activities should never be surrendered to AI, most mentioned strategy, and crisis communication. Practitioners are not all comfortable disclosing the use of AI in their work, particularly in agencies where there is fear that clients may stop using services if they become aware of tools which can be used in-house to do the job.

When asked about best first steps in the use of AI, more experienced users replied to create an AI policy, examine workflow, and then explore tools that can help with efficiency. Findings from other surveys indicate that tool use comes first in many instances.

To summarise, the findings from interviews and analysis under the familiar SWOT headings is provided on the following page (Table 2).



Image generated for this report using: Midjourney, Topaz Gigapixel AI, Topaz Sharpen AI, Adobe Photoshop 25 (Beta)

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Smart thinking – Saves time and cost of doing things – Access to more data and information to make strategic choices – Deeper engagement/ conversation – Offers creativity and innovation – Categorise information, learn something new – Reputational value – client knows you are ahead of time – Scalability and volume – Translation/ writing help (for someone whose first language is not English) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Misinformation, authenticity – Privacy, trust implications – Understanding correct usage of tools – Ethics, safety (input client’s information) – Need for intervention, controlled environment – Generic content/ quality – Out of date information – Copyright, plagiarism – Lack of understanding how technology works – Tools can crash because of simultaneous use |
| Opportunities | Threats (challenges) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focus on how tools can make us better and more strategic – Have a conversation – Query based thinking – Offer a different suite of services – Automate tactical spaces to concentrate on strategic spaces – Widen network & collaborate outside the physical proximity – Reconfigure – new dynamics, new things become part of the industry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Keep up with the developments – What to adopt & implement – who takes the liability? – Clients could ‘do it themselves’ for cost saving – Legislation lags technology, lose control, need to hit a pause button – Can you control the tool? Unsupervised, unregulated – What data is the AI trained upon? (Global voices?) – Digital divide – Disconnect between education and practice |

Table 2. SWOT analysis of survey and interview findings

Public relations capabilities and AI

To map the use of AI against the full capability set of practitioner teams, we allocated the 21 AI enabled tasks against the 11 main capabilities in the Global Capability Framework, see Figure 4a on the following page. (Appendix 1 shows the three categories of the Framework and the main capabilities under each category, then the full framework of capabilities with their associated sub-capabilities).

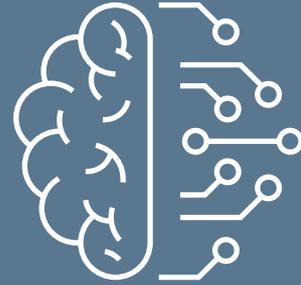




Figure 4a. Showing the Global Capability Framework with AI tasks. Innermost ring - categories of capabilities; middle ring - the 11 main capabilities; outermost ring - the AI tasks associated with the 11 main capabilities (tool used - Miro - Visual Collaboration Platform; Adobe Photoshop 2023)

To obtain a more granular picture we then took each of the three categories (communication, organisational, professional) with their capabilities and associated sub-capabilities, mapping the AI tasks against each of them. The following figures, 4b to 4d, show the results of this detailed mapping work.

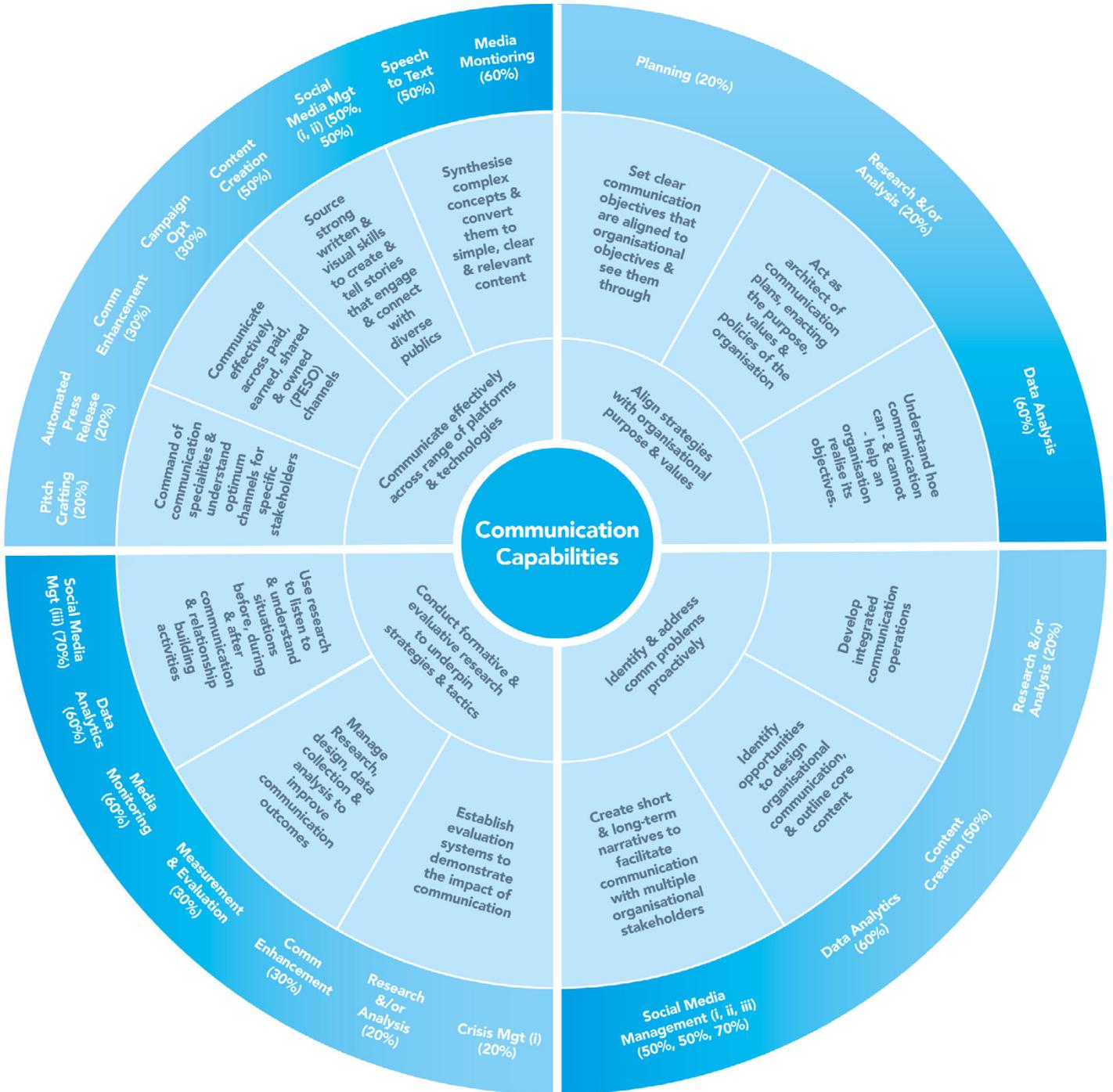


Figure 4b. Showing detailed view of communication capabilities, sub-capabilities, and associated AI tasks. The shading represents highest (dark) median to lowest (light) median around the level of AI assistance (tool used - Miro - Visual Collaboration Platform; Adobe Photoshop 2023)



Figure 4d. Showing a detailed view of professional capabilities, sub-capabilities, and associated tasks. The shading represents the highest (dark) median to the lowest (light) median around the level of AI assistance (tool used - Miro - Visual Collaboration Platform; Adobe Photoshop 2023)

Viewing these capability maps begins to tell a very clear story.

The *communication* and *organisational* categories of capabilities are areas where AI tools are being used to perform most tasks. Unsurprisingly, the capability to *communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies* stands out since this is where generative AI has made the most immediate inroads. It is also encouraging to see that AI is being used significantly in *conducting formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics*. There has long been a call for public relations to become more proficient in research in all dimensions of our work, and having tools to enable tasks to be done efficiently and effectively must be a benefit. In fact, a stand-out insight from this research is that data analytics is an AI task included in every competency except self-development and the development of others.

Under the organisational capability category, it is more surprising to see *facilitating relationships and building trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities* using most AI tools to perform tasks, closely followed by *building and enhancing organisational reputation*. Closer examination of the first appears to show more tactical (operational) than strategic tasks, but in the second, there is evidence of more strategic and analytical work, where solid evidence is being used to inform higher-level decision-making.

However, the arresting visual evidence is under the professional capability set. Here tasks are undertaken with much less support from AI tools. Indeed, the maximum number of tasks aided by AI under any professional capability is just 8 out of a possible 21 identified in this research. The *development of self and others, including continuing professional learning*, is unsupported by any. It is striking that personal development, ethics and leadership cannot be reduced to a set of AI support tasks, and even where AI is used, under the *provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor*, it is in a purely supporting role - to provide information which supports the advisory role.

Considering this, we would claim that at the senior level, what organisations want from their public relations professionals is their strategic expertise, an ability to keep the organisation safe (guardian role), and contemporary knowledge of the communication and wider context. Their ability to integrate these things thrusts them into a leadership role. Such work is not reducible to a series of tasks. Indeed, it requires practitioners to lift their heads above tasks. Integrated insights, an ability to read context, an ability to calibrate decisions, judgement, empathy, and an understanding of the best and right thing to do in a given situation, all guided by a strong ethical compass is the realm of the human. And the more AI is used to make decisions, the more the human dimension is needed to govern those decisions.

Insights and main recommendation

The findings of the first report, *Humans Still Needed*¹⁰, are reinforced in many ways, but there are some new insights arising.

- AI use is more prevalent now than it was anticipated in 2018 and has penetrated the areas in which it is used to a greater degree. Most tasks AI performs are assistive, that is they automate existing repetitive tasks. There is good evidence that AI is also augmenting some public relations work: is it is doing tasks that would be too complex, time-consuming, or expensive for professionals to undertake, such as data analytics and social listening. Some AI is doing a mixture of assistive and augmentative, for example, tools summarising discussions and reports and offering analysis/action points are reliable and very effective.
- The areas where it was least used in 2018 remain the same in 2023. It is now clearer than ever that professional capabilities are still fundamentally human-led. The tasks that are being performed by AI tools are supportive of more sophisticated decisions and processes which have complex, human dimensions that cannot yet be replicated by AI tools and systems.
- If anything, the professional challenge is greater than ever. The lack of regulation and the domination of the massive AI market by a small number of organisations who set the agenda has deep societal implications. At the practice and organisational level, the need for robust governance of AI is increasingly apparent. There is an appropriate place here for public relations professionals to provide an advisory role along the complete value chain from procurement, to use, to short and long-term impacts oversight. The potential negative and positive effects on relationships, reputation and wider society will become more acute over time.
- The role of public relations is being changed by AI. We now have new roles and opportunities related to fact-checking, added dimensions to ethical decision making and prompt engineering. Our role as advisor on an organisational level about the challenges of AI is also of greater importance.



Image generated for this report using: Midjourney, Topaz Gigapixel AI, Topaz Sharpen AI, Adobe Photoshop 25 (Beta)

The main recommendation of this report is that the public relations profession addresses the need for systematic education and training in this area as a matter of urgency. We are providing (in Figure 5 on page 24) a template for how this can be taken forward. It consists of a foundational level, then two main routes: one for those who will use AI tools on a regular daily basis, one for those who manage teams who use AI and who advise senior leadership. Inevitably there will be some cross-over between these routes depending on the needs and context of individual practitioners.

¹⁰ Ibid

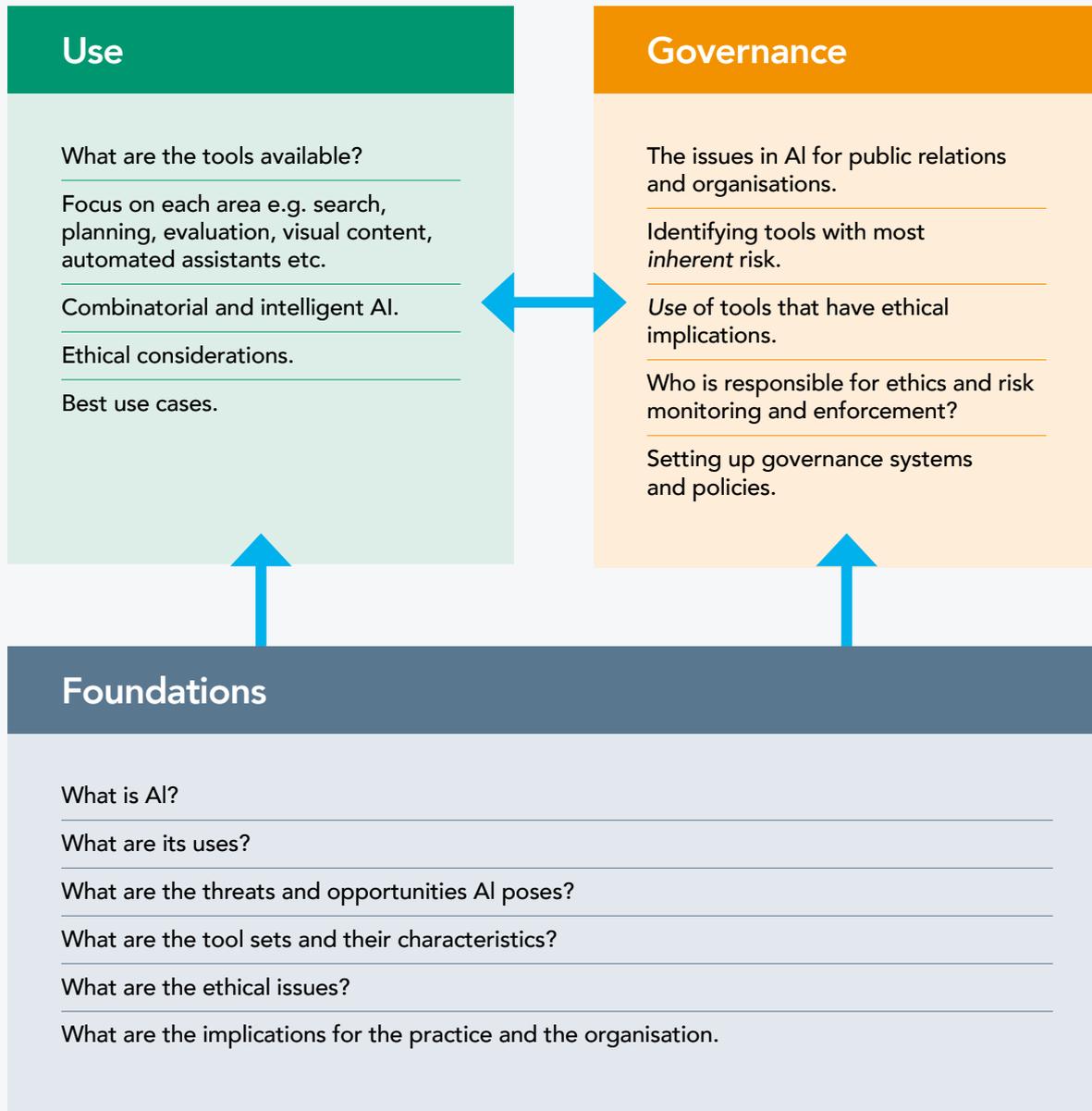


Figure 5. Educating the profession on AI
(tool used - MS PowerPoint)

Conclusions

Our research has shown that although the acceptance and adoption of AI has been relatively slow in the public relations profession, the advent of ChatGPT and the generative technologies has been an inflection point. The profession has woken up and now needs to sprint to keep up and indeed move ahead. It is only by being ahead of the game that it will grasp that most strategic of opportunities – to take an important seat at the governance table.

Getting AI right and understanding the ethical implications will be an existential issue for many organisations into the future. We conclude this report with a call to action to all public relations professionals and some practical advice:

- increase your understanding of AI and its implications: the goal is to understand this landscape
- at a tactical level, analyse the activities and tasks you undertake and develop a game plan for acquiring AI tools that assist you in performing them effectively
- do not be seduced by the ‘shiny tools’ because they will change dramatically over coming months. Think of tasks not tools
- work out a good starting point: first explore tools that are simple to use, low risk and that will make you more efficient. This generally means automating tasks you do regularly
- think through the implications of automation and the use of AI tools carefully. For example, fact checking will become essential if using AI. You may need to learn how to become a prompt engineer. You may need to edit within the style of your brand. This will be time consuming until you routinise (or AI) these processes
- strategically consider the new oversight roles you may take on and ensure you develop your professional capabilities to do them well

We see an important role for professional associations worldwide to show leadership to their members in this space. They can lead in these areas:

- creating structured CPD for their members on AI which embraces strategic and ethical elements well as training on tool use
- guiding education and training providers on what is required of future and current professionals.
- setting standards for training and development nationally and making these public
- producing model AI communication and governance policy documentation for use by organisations – in collaboration with partner organisations such as the Alan Turing Institute (UK)
- updating professional codes of ethics in light of AI advancements
- enforcing ethical standards in the use of AI among members
- compiling a bank of best use case studies

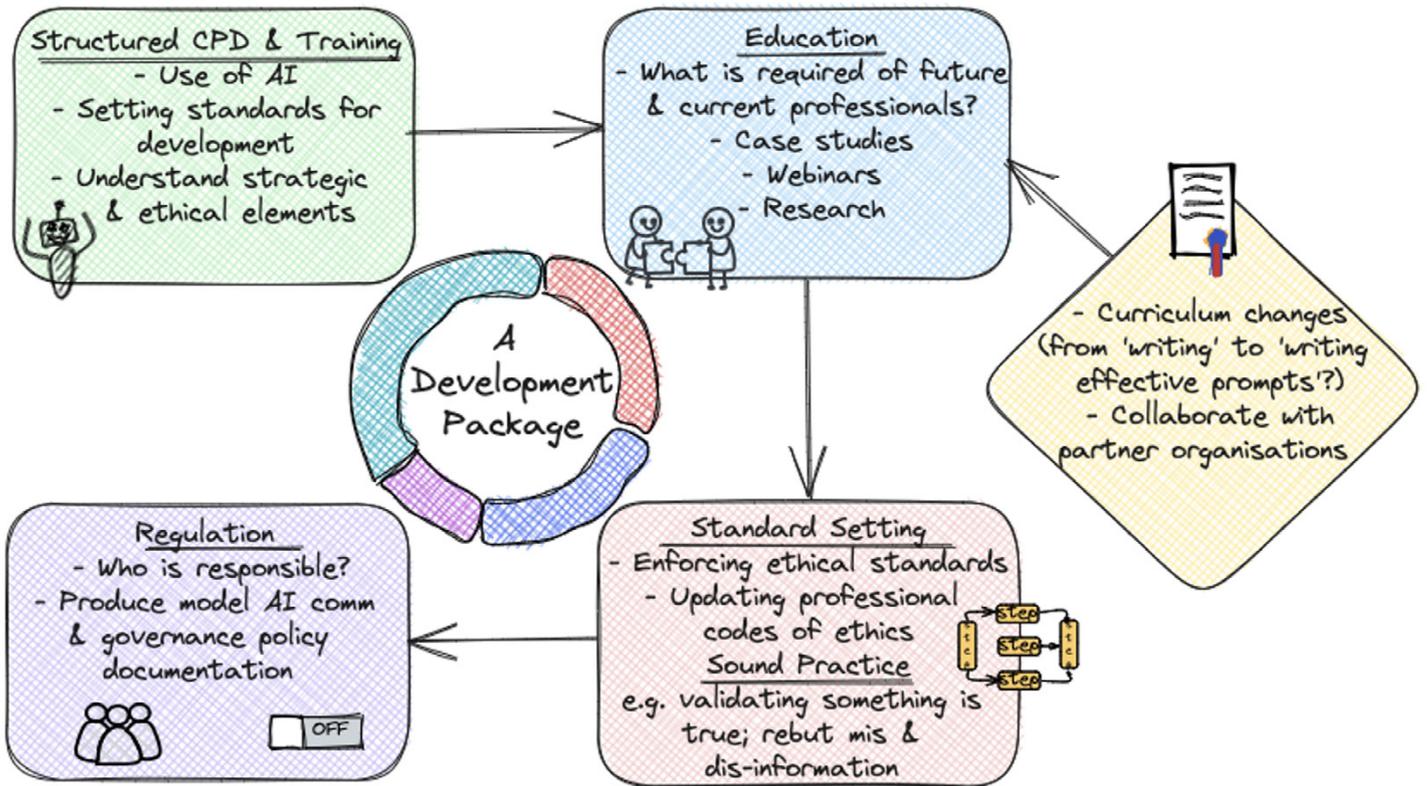


Figure 6. A visualisation of recommendations (tool used - Excalidraw)

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10. Ibid

Appendix 1: The Global Capability Framework: three categories of capability and 11 main capabilities

| Communication Capabilities | Organisational Capabilities | Professional Capabilities (those expected of any professional) |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values – To identify and address communication problems proactively – To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics – To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities – To build and enhance organisational reputation – To provide contextual intelligence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor – To offer organisational leadership – To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, in line with professional and societal expectations – To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning |

The full list of capabilities and their sub-capabilities

| Capabilities | Subcapabilities |
|--|---|
| To align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You set clear communication objectives that are aligned to organisational objectives and then see them through – You act as an architect of communication plans, enacting the purpose, values and policies of the organisation – You understand how communication can – and cannot – help an organisation realise its objective |
| To identify and address communication problems proactively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You create short and long-term narratives to facilitate communication with multiple organisational stakeholders – You identify opportunities to design organisational communication, and outline core content – You develop integrated communication operations |
| To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You use research to listen to and understand situations before, during and after communication and relationship-building activities – You manage research design, data collection and analysis to improve communication outcomes You establish evaluation systems to demonstrate the impact of communication |

| Capabilities | Subcapabilities |
|--|--|
| To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You have command of communication specialties, such as investor relations, and understand the optimum channels for specific stakeholders – You communicate effectively across paid, earned, shared and owned (PESO) channels – You have or can source strong written and visual skills to create and tell stories that engage and connect with diverse publics – You synthesise complex concepts and convert them to simple, clear and relevant content |
| To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You identify, analyse and listen to stakeholders and their communication needs. – You develop stakeholder engagement strategies and partnerships that are mutually beneficial – You communicate sensitively with stakeholders and communities across a range of cultural and other values and beliefs |
| To build and enhance organisational reputation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You identify, analyse and strategically advise on key issues and risks for the organisation You help the organisation to define and enact its purpose and values – You help shape organisational culture and its processes – You understand and manage key intangible assets (e.g., brand, culture, sustainability) |
| To provide contextual intelligence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You see the bigger picture - socially, culturally, politically, technologically and economically You identify strategic opportunities and threats, issues and trends – You operate in a connected world, demonstrating broad understanding of local and global diversity in culture, values and beliefs |
| To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You combine a long-term perspective with the agility to manage crises – You offer strategic counsel to executive management, particularly regarding the interests of multiple stakeholders – You influence organisational decision-making and development You negotiate with empathy and respect for all parties |
| To offer organisational leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You are part of, or have access to, the executive management team and help build internal alliances within the organisation – You demonstrate communication leadership by encouraging management based on dialogue – You demonstrate business and financial acumen through sound knowledge of the organisation's business and core processes |
| To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, in line with professional and society's expectations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You consider business objectives in the light of society's expectations – You clarify the consequences of a proposed action on others, ensuring potential outcomes are understood by decision-makers – You understand and apply ethical frameworks – You recognise and observe the societal obligations of professionals |
| To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – You take responsibility for your own continuous professional development, through a range of activities including training and education – You participate in industry events, represent the industry in public, and educate others on the role and value of public relations to employers and clients – You are able to offer professional guidance which involves, motivates and contributes to personal and team development |

Appendix 2: How two advanced AI users configure their AI stacks on their desktops

Andrew Bruce Smith is using these tools.

| Task | Tools | |
|--|--|--|
| Data Analytics | | |
| Collecting and analysing data from various sources to identify trends and track the effectiveness of PR campaigns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs | Note: Microsoft CoPilot (due to ship later this year) will also support this through MS Excel |
| Speech-to-Text Technology | | |
| Transcribing interviews, capturing notes and ideas, and creating content more efficiently through dictation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fireflies.ai – Sembly.ai – Otter | Note: Microsoft CoPilot (due to ship later this year) will also support this through MS Excel |
| Communication Enhancement | | |
| Tailoring messages to specific audiences using AI-powered tools that analyse data and provide insights on preferences and interests. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Structuredprompt.com | |
| Pitch Crafting | | |
| Using AI-assisted tools like Propel's PitchPrefer feature to craft pitches and increase the chances of earning media coverage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Buzzsumo (newly release AI assisted pitch) – Propel PRM Amiga – ChatGPT – Claude 2 | |
| Media Monitoring and Relations | | |
| Monitoring media coverage, identifying influencers, and creating personalised content for journalists. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Buzzsumo – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Zapier (for automation) – IFTTT (for automation) | |

| Task | Tools |
|---|--|
| Campaign Optimisation | |
| Providing recommendations for campaign improvements based on data analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs |
| Automated Press Release Distribution | |
| Distributing press releases to relevant media outlets using AI | |
| Transcription | |
| Transcribing audio and video interviews and searching for keywords in podcasts or press conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fireflies.ai – Sembly.ai – Otter |
| Keyword Search | |
| Searching for key words in text, audio and visual productions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT+ (with plug ins) – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs |
| Social Media Management (i) | |
| Identifying influencers and networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Buzzsumo – Trackr |
| Social Media Management (ii) | |
| Creating social media content, schedule posts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Structuredprompt.com – MidJourney – Dall-E – RunwayML – Adobe Firefly |
| Social Media Management (iii) | |
| Monitoring online conversations and sentiment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Buzzsumo – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Zapier (for automation) – IFTTT (for automation) |

| Task | Tools |
|--|---|
| Crisis Management (i) | |
| Identifying potential issues and crises based on data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT+ (with plug ins) – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Structuredprompt.com |
| Crisis Management (ii) | |
| Providing strategic recommendations for managing crisis communications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT+ with plug ins – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Structuredprompt.com |
| Content Creation | |
| Curating and creating content, such as brainstorming creative ideas, creating rich media content, and writing preliminary press releases and articles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT+ with plug ins – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs – Structuredprompt.com |
| Workflow | |
| Record minutes, prepare summaries, translation, canvass and schedule meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fireflies.ai – Sembly.ai |
| Research and/or Analysis | |
| Conduct public opinion research, analyse data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Typeform – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs |
| Planning | |
| Providing strategic recommendations for managing crisis communications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT+ with plug ins – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs |
| Measurement and Evaluation | |
| Providing strategic recommendations for managing crisis communications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ChatGPT + Advanced Data Analysis – Claude 2 – GPT Chrome extension for Google Sheets and Docs |

Stephen Waddington is using these tools:

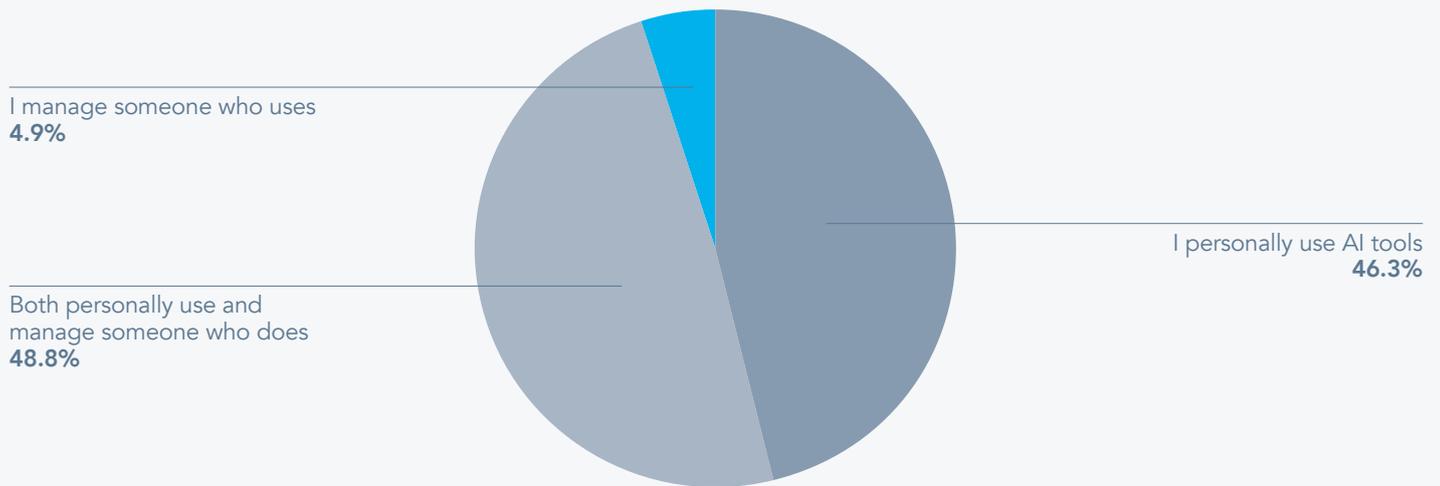
| Task | Tools |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Media evaluation | – ChatGPT |
| Creative tasks | – ChatGPT |
| Integration with web | – Bard |
| Summaries | – Claude |
| Audio transcription and analysis | – Otter and Fireflies |
| Relationship management | – Notion |
| Horizon scanning | – Notion |
| Images | – DALL-E and Mijourney |
| Design and layout | – Beautiful.ai |
| Content management | – Wordtune |
| Editing | – Grammarly |
| Media databases | – Prophet, Prowly |

Appendix 3: CIPR AI in PR reports

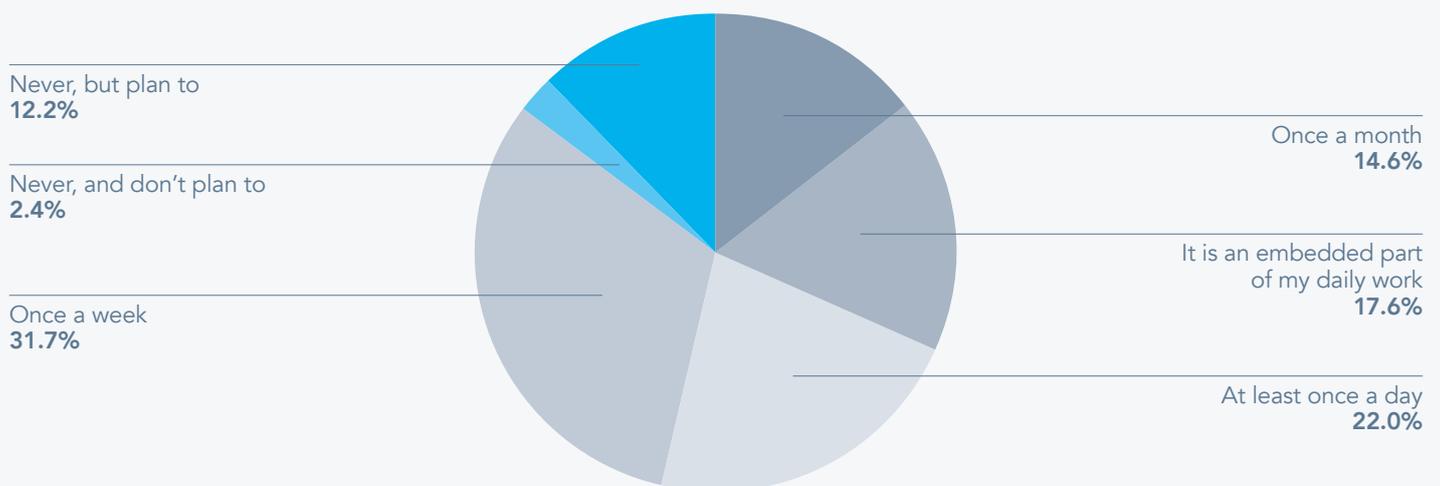
| | |
|------|---|
| 2018 | – Humans still needed: An analysis of skills and tools in public relations |
| 2019 | – An Introduction to AI in PR: Skills Guide – The impact of AI in Media & PR: Skills Guide – AI and data ethics: Skills Guide |
| 2020 | – The effects of AI on the professions: A literature repository – Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in PR |
| 2021 | – The Big Data and AI Readiness Report |
| 2023 | – Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and the impact on public relations (PR) practice |

All these guides and reports are available at
https://www.cipr.co.uk/CIPR/Our_work/Policy/AI_in_PR.aspx?WebsiteKey=0379ffac-bc76-433c-9a94-56a04331bf64

Appendix 4: Descriptive statistics



The chart shows the proportion of respondents (out of 41 completing the survey) who personally use AI tools, those who both personally use and manage someone who does, and those who manage someone who uses AI.



The chart above provides a visual overview of how frequently respondents engage with AI or automation tools

Author Biographies

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Emeritus Professor Anne Gregory is Chair of Corporate Communication at the University of Huddersfield, a Board member of the CIPR and serves on its International Committee and AI in PR Panel. Anne is a passionate advocate for the profession and an influential thought-leader and co-author of the CIPR's The Effects of AI on the Professions, Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in PR and the AI Readiness reports. She is former Chair of the Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communication Management, past President of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, holds a CIPR Honorary Fellowship and the Sir Stephen Tallents Medal for her outstanding contribution to the profession. Her international awards include the Institute for Public Relations Distinguished Pathfinder award for research, the Public Relations Society of America's Atlas Award for her international work and the Canadian Outstanding Achievement Award.

Jean Valin

Jean Valin, APR, Life Member, Fellow CPRS and Honorary Fellow CIPR (UK) is a trusted senior advisor in public relations, an author, editor, and mentor. He founded Valin Strategic Communications after a 30-year career as a senior communication executive. He has advised senior officials, CEOs, and ministers of the Government of Canada on communication matters throughout his career. Active throughout his career as a volunteer leader in professional bodies, he is considered the father of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management and a leading force behind the development and adoption of global standards of practice in public relations.

He is a frequent speaker at international conferences on the role of public relations, ethical practice, transparency in a social media connected world, artificial intelligence, and automation.

Dr Swati Virmani

Swati is a Senior Lecturer and Teacher Fellow at De Montfort University, UK. Her research aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, focusing on AI and its impact on professions, building inclusive smart cities, and digital strategy building. As a member of the CIPR's AI in PR panel, Swati has worked on two major research reports, looking at AI and Big Data readiness, assessing the profession's preparedness for an AI future, and emphasising the practical support required for upskilling. Her work also includes the 'Public Engagement Project' funded by the Alan Turing Institute (UK) to work with people from different backgrounds and underrepresented groups to expand public knowledge and unbiased information around data science and AI. More recently, she completed the AI & Data Science Educators' Programme delivered by the Alan Turing Institute and was a speaker at the AI Summit 2023 (London, UK) discussing how generative AI could increase automation, cost optimisation, and productivity when correctly tailored to user needs.

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