Old Macdonald Had A Data Farm, Ai, Ai O!

It was one of those moments when you read too much about the topic you want to write about and by the time you've covered data farming and the changing world where bots are taking over, a song has come into your head.

Is it just one of those crazy dad joke moments? Or do I want to escape to my childhood, where life seemed simpler, with an oink-oink here and a moo-moo there?

Let's face it, when change hits us and it looks too much like hard work, it's natural to try and escape or ignore it in the hope it will go away. It certainly is much harder to face what looks like potentially more work. As the buzz around AI gains momentum, communication professionals are facing another evolution, as we learn to adapt to using AI in our work and advise our organisations on stakeholder impacts.

Communicating Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence (CSCE) has just released the inaugural Communicating AI Global Report, which explored AI communication, what communication professionals are doing now, and how they are preparing and adapting for the future. As much as research participants identified that AI is here and has been for a while, only 35% are actively communicating and using AI tools in their function.

There is therefore a need for us to help lead organisations through change, as well as advise on some of the ethical issues around technological decision making, very similar to the social media journey.

Have a look at the survey highlights in our infographic below.

Communicating Artificial Intelligence
The bots are here but do *we* know where we are going?

CSCE — Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence

The 2018 Communicating AI Survey

The purpose of this survey was to benchmark what communication professionals know, feel and are doing on AI now, what knowledge is needed to be AI-ready and how they can assist in the process of "unveiling AI" in their companies.

Who Participated

More than **230** communication professionals from **25** countries

35% Of respondents are currently communicating AI

83% Of respondents described themselves as a Strategic Advisor or Business Leader

Currently using AI tools in their own communication work
40% Yes
56% No
4% Unsure

Readiness for communicating AI

Both those in organisations already communicating AI and those in organisations who aren't currently communicating AI chose dealing with ambiguity; management understanding the time it takes to learn new things; and new skills to learn, as their top three concerns about AI.

Those already communicating AI

63% Feel ready to communicate AI to stakeholders

89% Plan to learn more about AI

Those who aren't communicating AI

47% Feel ready to communicate AI to stakeholders

74% Plan to learn more about AI

"Websites, blogs, industry meetings/conferences and professional development programs are planned sources for learning about AI."

We can take small steps now to build knowledge on AI

Communicating professionals can mediate challenges in learning and understanding more about AI by taking small steps now to become familiar with AI.

Skills needed to communicate AI

1. Strategic context of AI as a global organisational issue.
2. Change strategy and management as the digital transformation advances and the pace of transformation accelerates.
3. Message strategy that focuses on organisational direction and understanding.

What communication professionals need to know:

The AI value proposition; AI strategies; best practices in communicating AI.

Continuing to provide strategic value

Respondents felt strongly that:
> Communication should serve a leadership role in communicating AI.
> Organisations should have an AI strategy to guide activities touched by AI.
> The disruption of AI will require people to be patient in learning new ways to do things.

"The communication industry has room for growth in fostering AI communication so communication professionals can serve a strategic leadership role."

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Advice from some global leaders

I decided to ask some of the CSCE faculty members and other senior professionals for their thoughts on the report and the role communication professionals should play in communicating AI.

Jane Mitchell FRSA,
London, UK

"The survey uncovered interesting insights into the widely differing levels of awareness and understanding about the current and potential impact of AI on the world of communication. What struck me in particular was the fact that over the years and in spite of the speed of (particularly) technological change, there is no significant change in the way leaders are responding to this inevitability.

Time and again over centuries leaders have come unstuck by either a dogged resistance to advances in technology or by an almost childlike need to be the first to have the shiniest new toy without first understanding whether it's the right toy for them. The CSCE survey corroborates that. One of the biggest concerns of communication professionals is that 'management' does not care too much about how long it might take to get to the grips with the potential of AI, but rather that they should be 'just be doing it, and now'.

A significant 90 percent of people in the survey have spotted this and as you would expect from world-class communication professionals, they believe that it will be crucial to develop an AI strategy for their organisations. And of course, they're right. Whether their leaders want to be first off the starting blocks or even if they have no intention of joining the AI party until they are forced to, a well-articulated, objective and focused strategy will at the very least get attention. At best, it will get leaders to sit up and think about AI differently and it will better prepare

them for the new world that will unquestionably have an impact on them and the organization they lead. This is where communication professionals with their skills can trigger a quiet revolution. After all, as Helen Keller once said, "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all".

A deeper understanding of the whole must come first. Only when communication professionals have a clear picture of the full impact on employees, customers and the business will we be in a position to strategically manage the future of human communication. The jury is out."

Sia Papageorgiou FRSA, Melbourne, Australia

"The Communicating AI global report indicates there is a thirst for learning more about AI and its implications on organisations of all shapes and sizes. What that means for communication professionals is that we have the perfect opportunity to be proactive and start learning about how this will change not only how we do we business, but how our roles as communication professionals will evolve.

While our level of understanding may be immature right now, communication professionals around the world have an obligation to get out there and start learning if we truly believe we are strategic advisors and business leaders. The communication industry on the other hand, has a responsibility to get that ball rolling. As Malcom X once said, "Education is the passport to the future."

Claire Watson MC, ABC, APR Regina, Canada

"Powered by artificial intelligence (AI), Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Apple and others relentlessly track us around the web. In fact, Amazon's recommendation engine generates 35 percent of the company's revenue. AI is not new. It's simply more noticeable because it's mainstream and moving quickly into companies embracing digital transformation.

However, AI is the tip of the iceberg. AI, machine learning and deep learning form a triumvirate impacting more than how to communicate AI. Rather, what does it mean to the future of human communication?

Dr. Amanda Hamilton-Attwell ABC, CPRC, IABC Fellow Pretoria, South Africa

"To answer the question about what the role of communication professionals should be in the field of artificial intelligence, we should revert back to the role we have in organisations - to represent the voice of an organization as it interacts with its numerous stakeholders.

This role places the responsibility to research and familiarise ourselves with the concept of AI in our industry firmly on our shoulders. Communication professionals, especially those that are in strategic advisory and business leader roles, should sharpen their research skills to identify credible sources, obtain reliable information about AI and AI in their industries and how it will impact the world of work for employees. This is not a project that can be done in an hour or two. It is a project that will require communication professionals to apply all their fact-finding and fact-checking and create understandable content for different target groups skills to the ultimate degree.

AI has been around since 1945, but it is only now becoming relevant to the business world. We have seen it in several SciFi films, but only now the knowledge about big data and machine learning have started to make it a feasible option for business, but there is still a significant level of uncertainty about the impact of AI. A Communication professionals first responsibility is to demystify AI in their organisation. If leadership is empowered with content to explain AI to the organisation, adapting to the changes it will require will be less stressful.

Thus, communication professionals have the skills to break the AI code for the organisation. As soon as they achieve that, their role will be to keep the conversation going. While they are busy assisting leaders in this regard, they need to improve their knowledge about bots and

systems like Alexa and Siri for business. Being technically aware about the possibilities of these systems will enable them to be the first adopters to use it to send focused messages and respond to specific needs of their target audiences.

Given the speed at which AI technology develops, there is no time to waste. You need to build your understanding before you can help your organisation to understand and before you can embrace it as a new way of creating understanding."

Lee Hopkins
Adelaide, Australia

"The number of communication professionals thinking that AI is not going to affect them is worrying.

Even a cursory glance at chapter two of Frank, Roehrig and Pring's book, 'What to do when machines do everything', will confirm that we are in the lull before the latest industrial revolution's storm. Futurists always point to the big things when it comes to industrial revolutions, yet it is the smaller players that make the most change.

We have seen social media go from an eccentric techfest in 2004, written off by businesses large and small as 'not for me', to be a major mover and shaker in the world of commerce and information. So too will it be with AI. The small and medium sized businesses will be radically transformed by third-party vendors at this moment probably not yet formed.

Better that we all do all we can to find out more about this coming onslaught, and get the on right side of history."

Cyrus Mavalwala ABC, MC

"There is much we can glean from this global study on AI, but please peruse the numbers and cherry-pick the findings that offer the greatest meaning for you as a communication professional and for your place of work.

A theme I want to highlight is one that I first noticed back in the mid-90s when I worked as a consultant in the technology practice of a global PR firm. Worldwide, every technology practice consultant was invited to write a short belief statement that would be printed beside their contact information in the paper telephone directory. It was an effort to better connect consultants in the same practice, but in different geographies. I wrote that in five years, by the new millennium, technology would be so embedded in every aspect of our personal and business lives that we'd stop trying to break it out as a separate "technology issue" and just treat it as a "business issue".

Fast forward 18 years. We learn that those not communicating AI at work (55%) were more likely to choose technology as the issue, while those involved in communicating AI at work (74%) saw AI as an organizational issue. Hence, the more we understand about something we see as either a threat or opportunity, the better we can accurately define how it impacts people and ultimately our organization. In the case of AI, we may have to do some quick catch-up to ensure we continue to be the catalysts within our organization."

I will leave the last words to Mary Hills, ABC, Six Sigma, IABC Fellow, FRSA from Heimann Hills Marketing Group Chicago, USA who was our research partner for this project.

"Rosabeth Moss Kanter, the insightful change management guru, outlines the Six Keys to Leading Positive Change: "show up, speak up, look up, team up, never give up, and lift others up." The Communicating Artificial Intelligence (AI) survey highlights the fabulous opportunity for strategic communication professionals to do all six if they grab the role waiting for them in communicating AI in their organisations. We couldn't have scripted an opportunity like this for our industry any better!"

So, we should look at having a 'beep-beep' here and a 'beep-beep' there, getting on board to learn more about AI as we run the risk of an industry-wide lack of understanding

of AI growing at a time when communication professionals are needed most in organisations. As the voice and conscience of the organisation we should learn from our painful lack of preparedness with social media and prepare ourselves to navigate the amazing opportunities and challenges a changing world presents.

Get your copy of the 2018 Communicating AI Global Report and check out some additional insights by some amazing thought leaders.

Adrian Cropley OAM, FRSA, ABC
CEO and founder of Cropley Communication

Adrian Cropley OAM, FRSA, ABC offers 30 years of experience spanning the corporate, public and not-for-profit sectors. A master communicator, Adrian coaches communication professionals and executives in change communication, stakeholder management, personal brand and strategic communication management. Adrian is a sought after trainer, advisor and mentor on a global scale. He is a past international chair for the International Association of Business Communic-ators (IABC) and serves on a number of not-for-profit and for-profit Boards. Learn more.