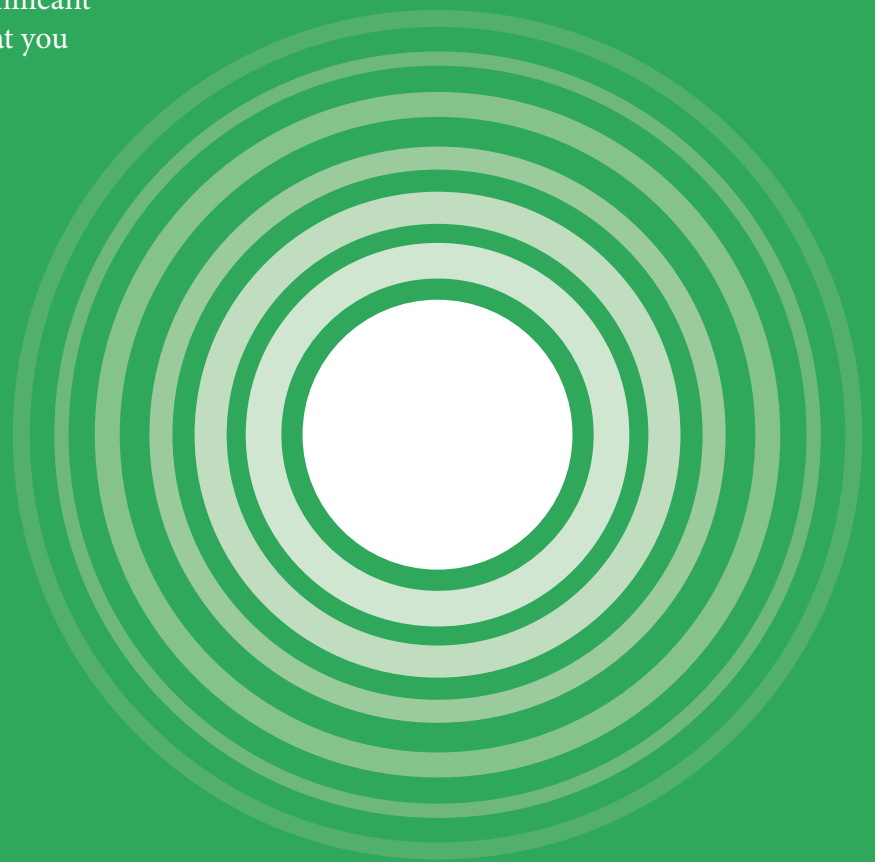


The Impact of AI on Public Relations

The Wadds Inc. paper highlights the significant impact of AI on public relations and what you should be doing about it.

June 2023



WADDS **INC.**

The Impact of AI on Public Relations

You will learn:

- **The rapid development and application of AI**

Why AI has the potential to change the nature of work within the next five years. OpenAI's GPT-3 and GPT-4 large language models are already being used in public relations workflow. It provides both an advisory opportunity and a means of working smarter and more efficiently.

- **The impact of AI on public relations practice**

How AI can assist in text and image generation, editing and summarisation, evaluation and modelling, and planning and decision-making. However, its potential misuse could also lead to bias, misinformation, and other ethical concerns.

- **The need for an adaptative and innovative mindset**

Why do need to make AI part of your learning and development. Experiment with AI tools in day-to-day tasks and establish an innovation team within your organisation to the potential benefits of AI.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will significantly impact the public relations profession in the same way as the internet and social media before it. You should give it urgent attention as a public relations practitioner for two reasons

I. It has the potential to impact the relationships and reputation that give your organisation and its customers the licence or permission to operate

II. It will disrupt how you work within the next five years. It will displace functional, mainly junior, roles within the practice

The term Artificial Intelligence is nonsense. It's artificial and it isn't very intelligent. It is based on training an algorithm to manipulate a data set called a large language model. AI predicts words or phrases based on the data set or large language model that it has been trained on.

A good place to start exploring AI and public relations is why there has been such a focus on the topic in the past six months. AI came to the fore in November 2022 when OpenAI launched a chat-based application called ChatGPT.

ChatGPT democratised the application of AI within the public domain, allowing anyone with a browser and internet connection to access the OpenAI GPT-3 dataset.

The adoption of ChatGPT has been extremely quick. It had 100 million users by January 2023. The appeal is its simplicity and ease of use. It will write text, role play or perform creative tasks based on a text-based instruction.

ChatGPT was initially based on the GPT-3 dataset, which included 17GB of books, websites, and Wikipedia. It was replaced by GPT-4 based on a larger 45GB dataset in March, accelerating the development of more sophisticated tools. It's able to handle both images and text.

GPT-5 is already being trained and will be released in the middle of next year. OpenAI and other large language models have stopped sharing information about the size and scope of their data sources citing competitive concerns.

A downside of ChatGPT is that the language models are not based on real-time information. GPT-3 was last updated in 2020 and GPT-4 in 2021. Google has addressed this issue with a large language model called Bard launched in March 2023. In addition to producing answers based on its dataset, it can pull live information from the web.

AI and management

Let's consider areas of AI risk. Issues that should be on your risk register relate to bias, copyright, and privacy. You should also be concerned about the ease with which tools generate misinformation.

We've tested the use of ChatGPT to write management profiles. After the first paragraph, it generally makes stuff up. In one instance, it wrote an obituary of a colleague rather than a biography.

The Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations, published by the CIPR AI Panel in 2020, foresaw many of these issues.

The key areas and issues highlighted in that report by Professor Emeritus Anne Gregory and Jean Valin remain entirely valid – the use and application of AI, social change; the impact on jobs and the nature of work; privacy control and transparency issues.

The arrival of a new generation of generative AI and machine learning technologies available at scale and inexpensively brings these issues into sharp focus for practitioners. These should be an area of research and investigation for any practitioner with a management advisory role.

Impact on public relations practice

Now let's examine how AI might impact your work as a public relations practitioner. We're already seeing a good deal of industry discussion in this area.

The optimistic perspective views AI as an assistant that'll help us work smarter. This is almost certainly why Microsoft Office calls its new AI assistant CoPilot, expected to be launched as part of Office 365 later this year. The pessimistic view is that AI will eliminate roles based on administration, content creation or production.

There's already a growing range of applications of AI in public relations built on top of the GPT-4 large language model.



Text and image generation

Tools can help generate content by predicting the next word or phrase from the GPT-4 database in response to a prompt. These tools also work for images. It's useful for idea generation and creating first drafts of anything text-based, but as I've suggested, it'll make mistakes and hallucinate. Fact-checking will become a critical discipline.

Editing and summarisation

This class of tools is extremely useful for making sense of a large document. It has already been shown to create summaries, press releases and presentations based on a report or transcript. A chatbot can also be used as an interface to ask questions about the dataset.

Evaluation and modelling

The measurement and evaluation community is experimenting with using ChatGPT to evaluate media content. It's also used for role play and readily suggests questions that stakeholders might ask about a situation or scenario.

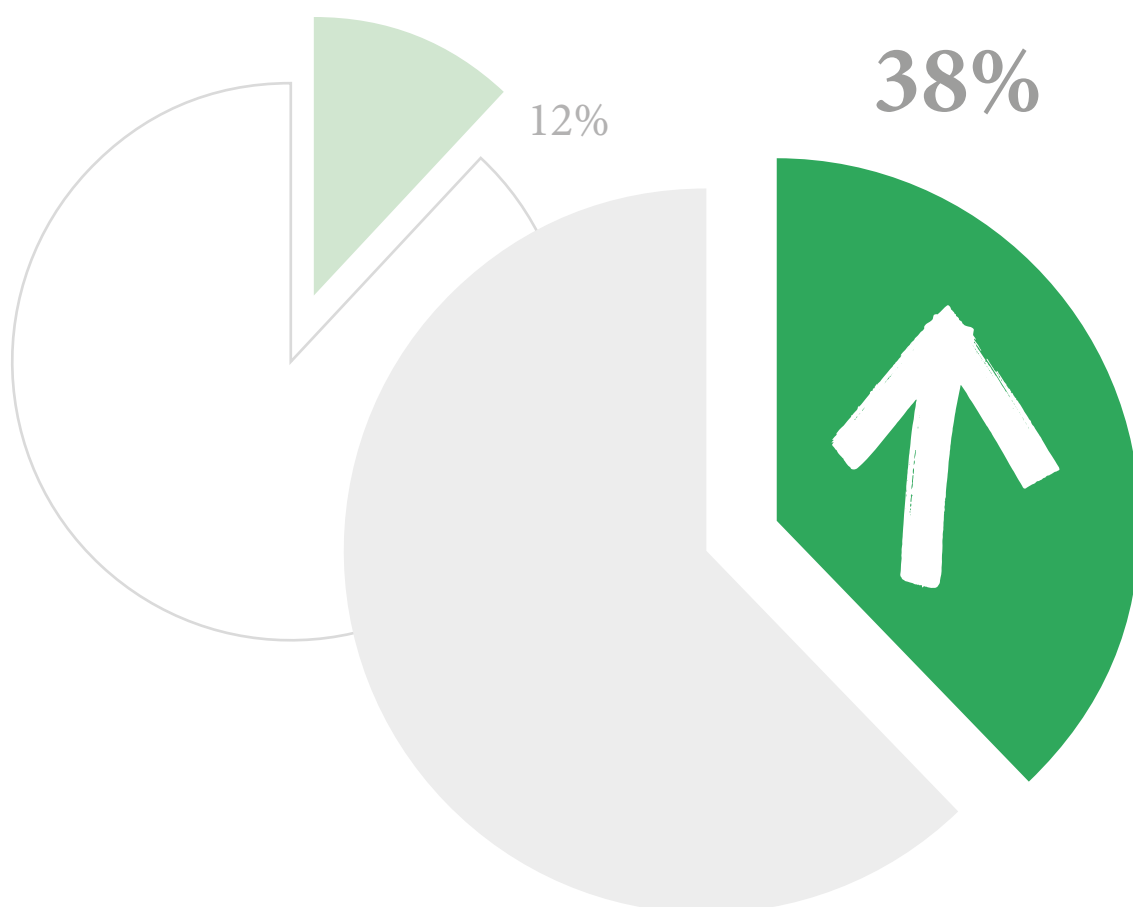
Planning and decision making

A range of tools act on datasets provided by the user and patterns and trends. This can help with planning and decision-making

Table 1 Applications of AI in public relations

A study published in 2018 called *Humans Still Matter* by Jean Valin, published by the CIPR AI Panel, explored the impact of AI on jobs in public relations. It used the Global Alliance Capability Framework as a benchmark.

The report found that **12%** of a public relations practitioner's total skills (out of 52 skills) could be complemented or replaced by AI, predicted that it would rise to **38%** by this year. Valin concluded that fundamental human traits such as empathy, trust, humour, and relationship building couldn't be automated. The research is set to be revisited later this year.



New opportunities for public relations created by AI

AI may eliminate some jobs but it will also create new roles for public relations practitioners. We have already discussed the potential for practitioners to address management issues related to reputation, bias, and ethics.

There is also the need to engage with machines. This is called prompt engineering and is the task of writing the instructions to query large language models and achieve a task successfully. We've included some common prompts for GPT-4 in the table below.

Task	Example
Templates	What are the key areas for a public relations plan? What are the key headlines in a crisis communication plan?
Editing and summarisation	Produce a summary of this article in 100 words [insert article] Produce a pitch for a business journalist based on this press release [insert press release]
Insight	What questions would you expect a journalist to ask about a merger and acquisition? What are the key issues in the retail energy market in the UK
Planning	What are the key management concerns about artificial intelligence? What questions should you ask in a public consultation about a housing development?

Table 2 Example prompts for AI in public relations

The following screenshot shows the response from GPT-4 to the request for the key areas for a public relations plan.



What are the key areas for a public relations plan?



Creating a public relations (PR) plan requires a careful balance of strategic thinking, creativity, and in-depth understanding of your audience and their interests. Here are the key areas you should focus on when developing a PR plan:



1. **Situation Analysis:** Understand and document the current state of the company or organization. Analyze the market, competitors, and the general environment. Evaluate past PR strategies and the successes or failures they have led to.
2. **Goals and Objectives:** Clearly define what you want to achieve through your PR efforts. Goals are broad and might include such things as improving company image, increasing brand awareness, or managing crisis communication. Objectives are more specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) actions that contribute to achieving your goals.
3. **Target Audience:** Clearly define who your PR plan will target. This could include customers, potential investors, employees, industry influencers, or the general public. Understanding your audience is crucial to tailoring your messaging and choosing the right channels for communication.
4. **Key Messages:** Define the main points you want to communicate to your target audience. These should be clear, concise, and consistent, supporting your overall goals and objectives.
5. **Strategies and Tactics:** Detail the specific approaches you will use to achieve your objectives and convey your key messages to your target audience. Strategies are the overarching plan or methods, and tactics are the specific actions or tools used.
6. **Tools and Channels:** Identify the tools and channels you will use to distribute your messages. This might include press releases, social media, blog posts, public speaking events, influencer partnerships, etc.
7. **Budget:** Determine the financial resources available for implementing your PR plan. This should cover staff costs, event expenses, media buying, content creation, and any other associated costs.
8. **Evaluation and Measurement:** Define how you will measure the success of your PR efforts. This could involve media tracking, surveys, web analytics, social media metrics, and other tools. This section should also include plans for adjusting your strategy based on the results you're seeing.
9. **Crisis Management Plan:** Always prepare a contingency plan for managing potential crises or negative publicity. This plan should include potential risk scenarios, responses, and a communication chain of command.
10. **Timeline:** Create a timeline for your PR plan, including when different components will be implemented and when you'll measure results.



Figure 1 The response by GPT-4 in response to a request for the key topics for a public relations plan

Adoption of AI by public relations

Public relations does not have a good track record when adopting new technology. It was slow to adapt and innovate in response to the internet, search engine optimisation, and social media. The early signs are that history may be repeating itself.

In May, a study by USC Annenberg and WE Communications reported that the public relations industry is slow to experiment with AI. Four-fifths of the 400 US respondents acknowledge the potential disruption that AI could bring to public relations practice, but less than one-fifth are knowledgeable about the application of AI.

This is consistent with data published by ICCO in March. It reported that 15% of public relations leaders use AI frequently or fairly frequently.

A quarter said that they will never use AI tools. According to the USC Annenberg and WE Communications report, AI innovation in public relations is driven by individuals rather than a structured organisational approach. Less than a quarter of respondents said their organisation is changing workflow due to new AI tools.

It's possible to ignore AI tools for now, but it will become impossible once it is embedded into web applications such as Office 365 and web browsers. This will force mainstream adoption in the business and consumer environment. In the meantime, we've suggested some tools in the table below that you should investigate.

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There's an AI for that

FutureTools and Product Hunt are useful databases of AI tools. Here are some of our favourites:

Beautiful charts and presentations - I've used this tool for three years. It brings artwork and design-level skills to presentation decks, partly by forcing you to use a template, but also by suggesting how you can improve your visual presentation.

ChatGPT idea generation - pay for the version based on the GPT-4 language set. Useful for brainstorming, the first draft of anything, and templates.

Fireflies contact and meeting reports - it circulates a summary of the meeting within 15 minutes of it ending, including actions, share of voice, and sentiment.

Midjourney images - the best of a series of applications that generates images based on a text description. Built on a Discord server and so requires a level of technical nous. The benefit is that you can see how other people are using the tool. DALL·E 2 is an alternative from OpenAI.

Otter transcripts - like Beautiful, I've used this tool for several years. It is brilliant at turning audio or video interviews into a transcript that you can edit. It will extract key themes and topics.

Wordtune editor editing and summaries - reductive AI is almost more useful than generative AI. This application will take long form content and summarise it page-by-page. Useful for summarising long reports or research papers.



Table 3 A range of example applications of AI in public relations

“There are significant AI issues related to organisations, from autonomous AI to legal and regulatory concerns. Organisations must review the potential impact on the fundamentals of their business and keep ahead of policy development.

“The explosion in tools isn’t sustainable. Many are solutions looking for a problem, but they do allow practitioners to try things out cheaply, quickly, and relatively risk-free. Only by using AI will you learn how and where it could be incorporated into work.”

Andrew Bruce Smith, director, Escherman, and chair, AI in PR Panel, CIPR

What should you do about AI in public relations?

Avoid shiny new object syndrome

In your day-to-day job, focus on the fundamentals. There is a high level of shiny new objects driving the AI discussion that can be a distraction. Avoid snake oil salespeople and growth-hacking Twitter threads.

Make AI part of your learning and development

Investigate its potential within your workflow in the two areas I've cited: risk and workflow. Consider its impact on your organisation and the opportunity for it to help you work smarter and more effectively.

Horizon scanning and engagement with management

Recognise that AI is a management issue. It is an opportunity to engage your management team through horizon scanning and scenario planning. Support your organisation in developing guidance and policy for employees

Workflow innovation

Create an innovation team within your organisation to examine AI tools and their potential application on your workflow. Follow a proven methodology to innovation focused on processes and systems.

An assertive opportunity for public relations

Navigating this new environment will involve expanding the public relations practitioner's current skill set, but there is a huge demand for information and knowledge within both the public relations profession and management.

Further reading

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