

How can communication professionals survive the era of Artificial Intelligence?

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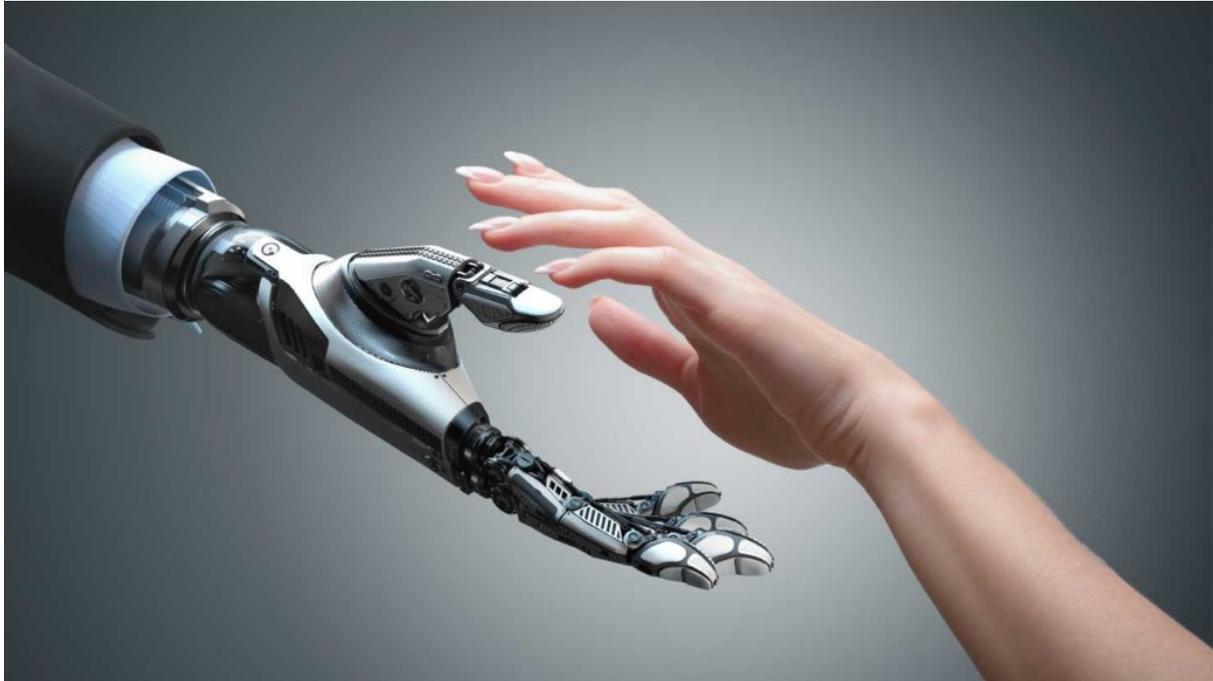


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Artificial intelligence (AI) presence is becoming bigger than ever before. It is already in our pockets, homes, and workplaces and we are not even conscious when a new AI appears and helps or outperform us.

AI is currently modifying our life with a closer implication in the communication field: customer service, press releases, and news articles are currently being done by AI and existing data is being used to create personalized content in digital marketing, advertising, and media. This could have huge implications for communication professionals as artificial intelligence can pull exhaustive information that provides personalized content in a faster way (McAllister, 2017).

In this context, communication professionals need to be prepared. This study aims at understanding the likely impacts of AI on the communication practice to know what skills and training are needed to face and survive its current and near-future impacts.

To do it, the research approach involved methodological triangulation and consisted of two data sources based on primary research and one based on secondary research.

- 1. Consulting rounds with experts using the Delphi method.** This technique is an intuitive methodology for organising and sharing expert forecasts about the future and often used when there is incomplete knowledge about a phenomenon (Weaver, 1971).

The Delphi process can be continuously repeated until a consensus is achieved. The number of Delphi iterations usually varies from three to five. However, most authors indicate that three iterations are often enough to reach a consensus (Hsu & Sandford 2007).

The Delphi process.

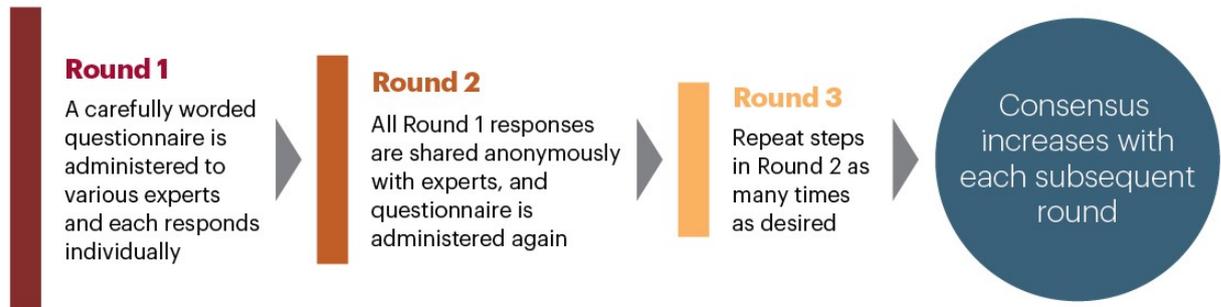


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2. **A focus group with communication students.** The focus group focused on gathering opinions and views about the future of communication practice leading to a discussion. This was conducted online for 1 hour and 30 minutes.
3. **Secondary research** was done from thorough a combination of academic databases such as EBSCO and SAGE with a web-based search on Google and Google Scholar. The search focused on identifying available research from studies and news about the current AI technology advancements, the impact of artificial intelligence in the communication practice and the present concerns about job automation and displacement, to finally explore what has been said, forecast and reported by experts and analysts about the likely future effects of AI in the communication practice.

The expert panel was formed by seven experts carefully selected by their qualities in either communication, education or technology and the focus group was formed by seven international students. Participation was anonymous and confidential.

Impacts of AI on the communication profession

Nowadays, the use of AI and automation is focused and specific. This kind of AI is known as Artificial narrow intelligence (ANI) and refers to a computer's ability to perform a single task extremely well.

AI and automation are currently being used to do all the repetitive tasks and have the potential to write data-driven stories, produce news releases, create media lists, transcribe audio and video, produce personalized content in marketing, advertising, media, and business communications, predict media trends and monitor social media.

The likely impacts of AI on the communication profession are on the one hand the enhancing of efficiency and productivity, freeing professionals to focus on creativity and strategy. On the other hand, repetitive and lower-level jobs; those related to administration, customer service, market research, and account executives, will be the most probable to be automated in a timeframe of five years. Contrary, higher position jobs or those involving originality, creativity, imagination, strategy and decision making will be the harder to automate.

Skills needed

Soft skills will be the main priority to stay relevant in the communication practice because those will be the ones harder to automate by AI. Until now, machines have shown inefficient to imitate skills related to social interactions.

Technical skills. The emerging media expertise of young people has been overstated and over-assumed; communication practitioners are not keeping up with the rise of technology and Universities are having difficulties to include this into their programs. The acceleration of technology means learning and constantly re-skilling must be a constant seeking.

Communication professionals need to know the basics of data science and need to be trained to raise the right questions and help the organisation in the management of innovations, dealing with issues and crisis and increase reputation and accountability.

Training needed

Two types of training are needed; the first is to gather experience with the current AI and automated tools to understand their benefits and limitations, and the second is to focus on developing human qualities that AI can't replicate.

Skills and training priority

Soft Skills	Technical Skills	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Open mind▪ Relationship building▪ Adaptation▪ Emotional intelligence▪ Creativity▪ Innovation▪ Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Data analysis▪ Digital communication▪ Digital marketing▪ Basic programming▪ Social media commercial tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Integrated workflow and collaboration with technical experts▪ Data analysis and management▪ Ethical responsibility

Recommendation

There is a need to raise awareness about the impact of AI and automation in the communication profession. Training is still very traditional; digital communication and data analysis are being taught as separate subjects and courses are not timely updated.

Academic programs should:

- Be updated according to the [exponential acceleration of technology](#).
- Integrate a digital media workflow in collaboration with technical experts.
- Combine creativity and social interaction skills with business intelligence obtained by big data, to create stories online and offline.

To survive the age of artificial intelligence, communication professionals need to:

- Gather experience with the current AI and automated tools to understand their benefits and limitations.

- Focus on developing technical skills related to data analysis, digital communication, and social media management.
- Develop distinctive human qualities like emotional intelligence, storytelling, stakeholder dialogue, relationship building, leadership, and adaptation.

Finally, ethical responsibility should be emphasised in every step of the future communication profession.

References

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This blog:

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Eduardo Alejandro López Jiménez is a communication, web design, and digital marketing consultant. Since 2005 his career developed in technology training centres being able to work with Adobe, Autodesk, and Apple. As an external consultant/trainer he has been involved in several projects related to digital communication, SEO, SEM, SEA, web design and eLearning with international companies like IKEA, the Royal Dutch Shell, and Appen. He is very curious about the world; love to travel, play videogames and learn from different cultures and mindsets. He can be contacted at posicionate.seo@gmail.com