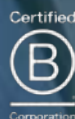# THE IMPACT OF AI ON IN-HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND MARKETING

The Impact of AI on In-House Communications, Public Affairs and Marketing

AI is transforming communications, public affairs and marketing, changing how organisations monitor issues, create content and engage stakeholders, prompting fresh debate about the profession's future.

Hanson Search and The Work Crowd spoke with 30 senior in-house leaders across communications, public affairs and marketing to understand how AI is actually being used in practice and what challenges it presents. This report explores the trends shaping the profession, the skills and capabilities in demand, areas where leaders remain cautious and examples of tools already in use.

Efficiency, Productivity and the Changing Nature of Work

Leaders repeatedly pointed to AI's role in taking on routine and time-consuming tasks. Many described improvements in how quickly and efficiently tasks were completed, with one Global Communications Director estimating that "I am 20 to 30% more efficient because I use AI."

The main tasks assigned to AI include:
- drafting initial versions of content
- summarising reports
- creating visuals
- analysing surveys
- transcribing meetings

This has allowed teams to reallocate time to more strategic work such as creativity, planning and direct stakeholder engagement. One Head of Corporate Affairs observed that "the day-to-day will get lighter. Fewer decks, fewer reports, less back and forth. That creates space for better ideas and faster momentum."

Leaders were keen to emphasise that AI is not replacing roles but complementing them. Several described it as an 'able assistant' that can help small teams operate with a level of effectiveness usually reserved for much larger, better-resourced functions.

Budgets and Resources

For many leaders, the ability to do more with less is what makes this effectiveness so valuable. A communications lead in financial services highlighted how AI allows teams to "do more with less," a critical advantage in fast-scaling or budget-constrained environments. Yet there is also a realistic view about cost. Some questioned the growing number of tools and the risk of investing without a clear plan. One communications director described the sheer volume of platforms as "completely overwhelming" while others voiced concern about chasing novelty for its own sake.

> **"I am 20 to 30% more efficient because I use AI."**
> – GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
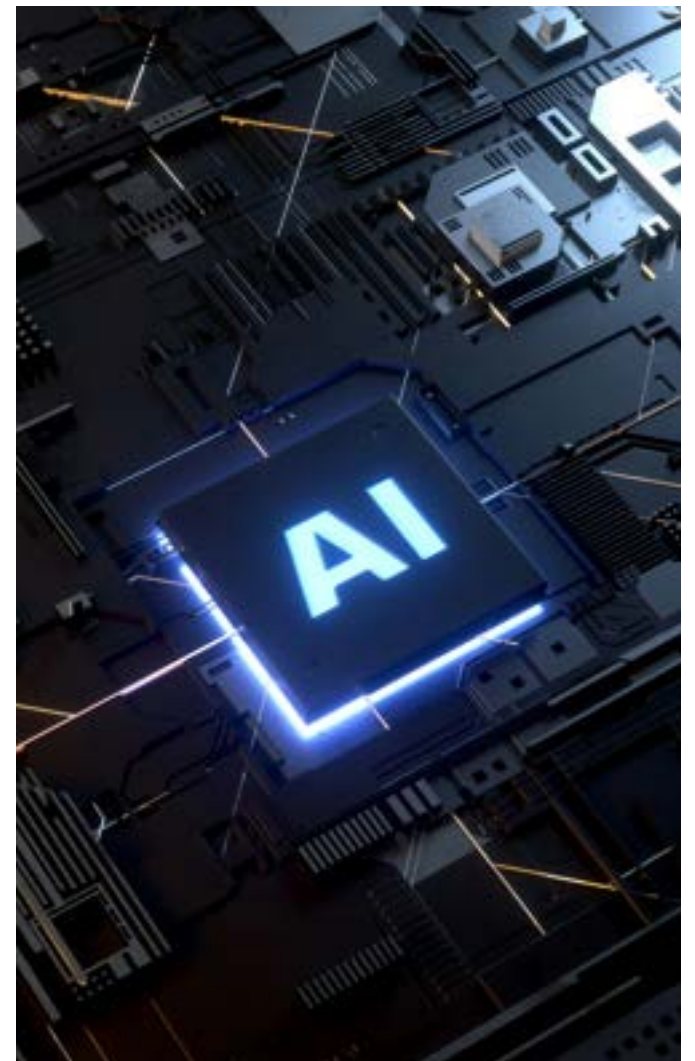
Adoption Challenges and Cultural Change

Many of the frustrations expressed by leaders focused not on the tools themselves but on adoption. In one interview a participant stated "90% of companies that have invested in AI have not seen significant financial benefits, and more than 80% of AI projects fail to deliver significant business value." They added: "Nearly half of employees have no idea how to achieve the productivity gains their employers expect." A senior public affairs director reinforced this: "The biggest barrier to success is the AI adoption illusion. Employers provide their team with AI tools and expect immediate results. The reality is successful AI adoption requires cultural change."

Successful adoption depends on leaders setting the tone. A senior communications leader in the technology sector noted: "Too many see AI as a tool for their team to 'do stuff'. They don't lead by example and use AI to improve how they work."

Training, Skills and the Future of Talent

Most organisations are actively investing in training, alongside encouraging experimentation.

Formal programmes are emerging, such as "AI driving licences," while some teams run weekly challenges to normalise the use of new tools. The need for capability building is clear. One senior government affairs lead remarked that providing AI tools without training is "like giving people a company car if they don't know how to drive. And it's a high-performance sports car." At the same time, employees are expected to take the initiative to self-learn. Leaders often described carving out their own time to test tools and "play with them yourself" to explore their potential and set the right culture.

Skill gaps are already visible. Leaders highlighted growing demand for adaptable, AI-literate talent, though the precise definition of 'fluency' is still evolving. Key attributes now include a willingness to explore technology, ethical awareness and critical thinking when using tools. At senior levels, integrating these tools into business processes and making the case for their adoption is becoming a key expectation. Yet there is also concern about over-reliance. In Public Affairs, for instance, some worry that if junior staff skip essential training in research, writing and analysis, the next generation of advisers could be left without the foundations needed for more senior roles.

Yet despite these concerns, human-centred skills remain central. Subject knowledge, contextual understanding, creativity, emotional intelligence and the ability to build trust are considered more essential than ever. As one senior communications leader explained: "This means that while AI can make us faster or help with phrasing, it doesn't replace human judgment. Every communication still requires quality control, contextual understanding and the ability to anticipate sensitivities that AI currently cannot grasp."

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>
> – HEAD OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Tools in Practice

Teams are already using a wide range of AI tools to support their work. The most commonly mentioned was ChatGPT, used for answering quick questions, conducting desk research, summarising reports, stakeholder mapping and generating first drafts or campaign ideas.

Some leaders noted that they use it to refine their own writing, though with a note of caution given the risk of errors or 'hallucinations.' Claude was also highlighted by some as a preferred option for producing concise summaries.

Microsoft CoPilot is increasingly used for research, drafting and streamlining business processes, while Google's Gemini GEMs and NotebookLM are being used for meeting notes and analysing documents. Other tools include Canva, where AI functions support design, photography and SEO, as well as AI-powered monitoring services that track parliamentary or media activity in real time.

Several organisations are building in-house GPT platforms or corporate AI chatbots, used for tasks such as drafting speeches, preparing content plans, media briefings or survey analysis and graphic creation, translation and meeting summaries to ensure sensitive information is managed securely.

Alongside everyday tools, more tailored applications are being developed. Investors are using AI-powered analysis of earnings call transcripts to scrutinise the wording of CEO or CFO statements. Agencies have begun offering interactive brand voice engines, media intelligence dashboards and monthly AI coaching to help clients adapt. AI-enabled platforms including Make, Defy and n8n are also becoming standard in marketing and communications roles, reflecting the growing importance of integration and automation. Tools such as LexisNexis AI are summarising documents in the legal sector, while Garfield AI has broken new ground as the first law firm globally to be authorised and regulated to provide services solely by AI. Creative teams are experimenting with AI tools to repurpose content, such as turning transcripts into videos or animations, though results can still be inconsistent. Albert.AI was highlighted as an example of advanced marketing automation that is now more affordable for smaller businesses.

AI is most widely used for:
- **Content creation** (press releases, blogs, campaign ideas)
- **Summarising & research** (reports, meetings, legislative tracking)
- **Monitoring & analytics** (parliament/media activity, customer engagement)
- **Design & visuals** (social graphics, marketing materials).

> "Providing AI tools without training is like giving people a company car if they don't know how to drive. And it's a high-performance sports car."
>
> – SENIOR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS LEAD

Regional Perspectives

Adoption of AI in communications, public affairs and marketing varies across regions, reflecting differences in budgets, regulatory environments and organisational culture.

In the UK, adoption is shaped by constrained budgets and smaller in-house teams. Leaders described using AI for repetitive tasks such as drafting bios, reports and content, as well as stakeholder mapping, sentiment tracking and supporting annual reporting. Repurposing content - turning transcripts into blogs or videos, for example - is seen as a practical way to broaden audiences when internal resources are tight. Teams emphasised that efficiency gains depend on planning and training rather than casual use.

Across Europe, leaders described a more cautious approach with greater focus on compliance and ethics. AI is applied to summarising reports, refining information from public sources and legislative tracking, alongside translation of policy documents into multiple languages. Several noted that it can reduce reliance on consultants for tasks such as advocacy intelligence or copywriting, though not for higher-level strategic advice. European in-house teams also tend to use media and political monitoring as well as document editing, with practices shaped by the more cautious regulatory climate and a stronger emphasis on compliance and ethics.

In the US, meanwhile, use is moving fastest, supported by larger budgets and an inherent culture of experimentation. Leaders described applying AI for proactive media intelligence, real-time performance monitoring and customer engagement analysis. Investors are also making significant use of AI-powered analysis of earnings call transcripts, where precise word choices of CEOs and CFOs are scrutinised for market impact. Repurposing content into new formats was noted as another area of rapid experimentation, with video and image generation tools tested widely.
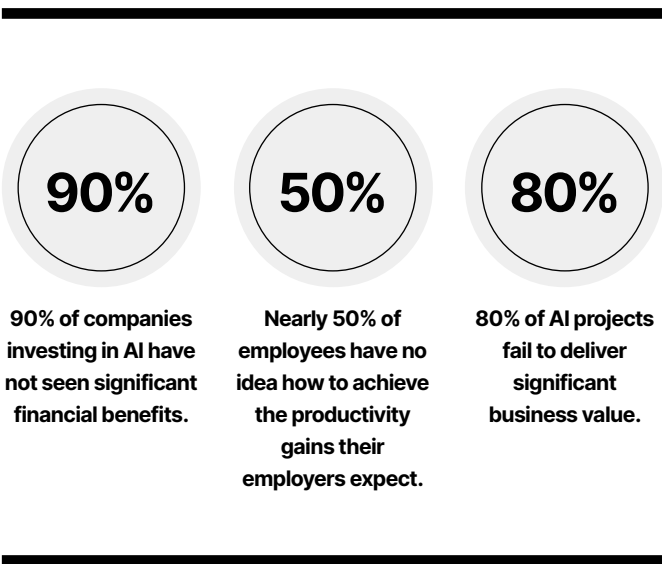
Risks and Limitations

While there was optimism, the risks were also made clear.

Accuracy and reliability remain inconsistent and outputs need to be checked: 'You can sometimes get wildly wrong answers if you're not careful.' Others warned against over-automation, concerned that junior team members could be replaced, in turn weakening the pipeline of future talent. There was also unease about homogenisation, with fears that AI could make all content sound the same, and around the potential for regulatory or reputational risk if critical numbers or wording are mishandled. Finally, several leaders noted the danger of losing human connection - the concern that people could retreat into a personalised AI world rather than engaging directly with one another in ways that, while harder, are ultimately more rewarding.

Where Leaders See Change Ahead

Most leaders agree that AI will be the single biggest driver of change in communications, public affairs and marketing in the coming years. It is already enhancing performance but its long-term impact will be determined by how effectively organisations align culture, capability and leadership. Optimism, however, remains strong. "The most exciting thing about AI is its ability to unlock and improve human talent," said one senior communications lead. Others highlighted how it can "level the playing field," give smaller teams access to scale and "make government affairs more evidence-led and responsive."

At the same time, leaders are naturally pragmatic. AI will not replace the need for human strategy, judgement and creativity. Instead, it will redefine roles, sharpen expectations and force professionals to focus on the uniquely human aspects of influence and communication.

90%

90% of companies investing in AI have not seen significant financial benefits.

50%

Nearly 50% of employees have no idea how to achieve the productivity gains their employers expect.

80%

80% of AI projects fail to deliver significant business value.

This report provides an overview of how teams are currently using AI in communications, public affairs and marketing. For the industry, the priority now is to ensure AI helps improve results whilst keeping human skills essential for effective communication.

Recommendations for Leaders

Based on the experiences shared, several lessons emerge for in-house teams:

- Use AI yourself and establishing a culture of experimentation is encouraged.
- Move from casual use to ensure a shared level of understanding across teams.
- Avoid over-reliance that limits the development of junior staff.
- Make clear in recruitment that strategy, judgement and emotional intelligence remain essential.
- Select tools that support business needs rather than adopting the latest fad.
- Ensure teams understand not just how to use AI but why it matters.

Our thanks go to the senior leaders from the UK, Europe and the USA who took the time to share their experience and contribute valuable insights to this report.

List of common AI tools used

- **ChatGPT:** Used for first drafts of press releases, blogs, talking points and policy narratives. Also used for asking questions, research, summarising long reports, testing or improving existing writing and stakeholder mapping.
- **Microsoft Copilot:** Used for research, drafting and helping with everyday tasks in Microsoft.
- **Google Products (Gemini/Bard, NotebookLM):** Used for summarising meeting notes, analysing documents, running searches and editing text. They also include AI-powered search overviews.
- **Claude:** Used for generating summaries.
- **Make, Defy and n8n:** These tools are becoming a standard feature of the marketing and communications toolkit.
- **Canva:** Integrates AI features to help teams create social media graphics, marketing materials and illustrations.
- **Albert.AI:** Used to test different marketing messages and designs and to measure how well campaigns perform, making advanced automation accessible for smaller businesses.
- **Garfield AI:** The first AI-powered law firm licensed and regulated to deliver legal services, including representing clients in court.
- **LexisNexis AI / Lexis+ AI:** Used in the legal sector for summarising documents.
- **AI-powered monitoring services:** Used to track parliamentary activity and media coverage, with alerts when key stakeholders make relevant statements.
- **Internal or corporate AI chatbots:** Developed by some organisations to manage editing, research, planning and speechwriting, designed to protect data by operating within secure company systems.
- **AI agents:** Used for tasks such as retrieving media analysis or compiling survey results.
- **AI-driven analytics:** Used for customer experience measurement, market tracking and predicting consumer needs.
- **Interactive brand voice engines:** Used to generate content consistent with the organisation's tone of voice. Always reviewed by humans.
- **AI image and video generation tools:** For repurposing existing material, such as turning transcripts into animations, videos or visual content. Results can be inconsistent.
- **AI transcription services:** Used to record meetings, workshops and discussions.
- **Microsoft Word's built-in editor features:** Used for grammar checking, rephrasing and improving clarity.

About Hanson Search

Hanson Search is a globally recognised, award-winning talent advisory and headhunting consultancy. We excel in helping businesses recruit world-class, transformative talent for business-critical roles in areas of revenue, reputation, and risk management.

Our expertise lies in building successful ventures worldwide through our recruitment and executive search processes for consultancies, and in-house teams across industry sectors in communications, sustainability, public affairs and policy, digital marketing, and sales. Over our two-decade history, we have successfully hired C-suite executives, curated boards, and built teams that drive growth and transformation for start-ups, scale-ups, established organisations and brands, non-profits, and governments.

Our reach has no boundaries, we have recruited roles across all continents, with a network of consultants and research function based across Europe, the UK, the US, and the Middle East, providing local and global talent and market insights.

And for freelance or interim talent solutions, our sister company, **The Work Crowd**, is ready and waiting to help.

If you would like to get in touch with us either for business or general enquiries, please email hello@hansonsearch.com and we would be happy to talk.

hansonsearch.com

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