



Positive Attitudes, Increasing Use of AI at Chicago Companies and Agencies; Accuracy, Ethical Issues, Privacy are Communicators' Top Concerns

Key Findings of Communication Leaders of Chicago Survey

CHICAGO, February 27, 2024 -- Leading communication professionals are very positive about the adoption of generative Artificial Intelligence in their organizations, even while their companies may lag in dedicating formal oversight to the roll-out of AI, according to a recent survey conducted by Communication Leaders of Chicago (CLC) in conjunction with DePaul University's College of Communication.

Those were among key findings of the AI-Human Communication Research Project. More than 80 Chicago area communication leaders at corporations, agency heads, and senior professionals participated in the survey. The results were discussed at a CLC event held at DePaul's downtown Chicago campus.

Key highlights of the survey:

- 78 percent of respondents said they held slightly to extremely positive attitudes about AI adoption, while 62 percent of their clients (including internal corporate clients) had positive attitudes. Negative attitudes about AI adoption were low.
- Only 33 percent of the respondents said their firms currently have a dedicated department or team responsible for managing and overseeing the use of AI. Those that do have appointed AI compliance groups, governance committees, and AI task forces and communication labs.
- The top three concerns about adopting AI in strategic communication were AI output quality/accuracy, ethical issues, and privacy/data security.
- For current AI use, survey respondents ranked creative content (43 percent), research and data analytics (30 percent), administrative (18 percent), and social media management (16 percent) as top applications in their companies.

- The top three AI/tech organizational priorities for 2024 were data-driven strategies, authenticated AI generated content, and AI workflow management. Other priorities cited by respondents were AI-derived business intelligence and building AI-enabled teams.

“The CLC-DePaul research addressed practical questions about the fundamental challenges and issues that communicators and public relations professionals face in embracing generative AI,” said Jack Modzelewski, co-chair of the CLC board. “It’s clear that more firms need to impose AI operating policies and guidelines as AI-enabled work expands. And as an industry we need be a leader in AI best practices and applications.”

“We believe this collaboration is the first of its kind in AI-Human communication research between a university research lab and a professional industry organization,” said Lexa Murphy, dean of DePaul’s College of Communication. “This partnership will open an important dialogue and provide a strategic platform for advancing AI-driven communication research and practices.”

DePaul and CLC will publish their full research report this Spring. Other highlights of the survey:

- For their own AI use, respondents listed ideation and inspired thinking, data analytics, and summarizing and creating personal written content as their top reasons for employing AI software and tools.
- Half of the respondents said AI work product is permitted in their companies on a limited-use basis, and 20 percent said it is permitted for “any use.” Forty-four percent said their organizations have an AI policy or code of conduct.
- A third of respondents said AI is discussed weekly in meetings and another 37 percent said it is discussed “ad hoc.”

Survey respondents were communication leaders and senior professionals at corporations, agencies and other organizations based in the Chicago metropolitan area. Participants average nearly 30 years of experience in the field of communications.

The Communication Leaders of Chicago's mission is to create meaningful ways to strengthen the profession and the people who practice it – fostering a community for sharing new ideas, solving challenges, networking, fellowship, and celebrating achievements. Initiatives sponsored by CLC include the Chi-ologue Series; timely and relevant research; networking events; and the annual Distinguished Senior Leader Award presentation.

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