



## Transcript for S9 E7 The role of artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI in internal communication with Alex Fahie

Cat Barnard (00:42)

Hello and welcome to a fresh episode of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I am one of your co-hosts, Cat Barnard, and I'm joined as ever by Jen Sproul and Dominic Walters. Today I have invited a guest to come and speak with us about artificial intelligence and generative AI. I'm trying to remember when this could have happened because, if I caveat this with I met Alex Fahie during the fog that was one of the first or second lockdowns, so 2020, 2021, we met at an online event which was organised by a third party who's very much in the space of social impact and business for good.

And I think I remember, Alex will look at me blankly, but I think I remember that we were brought into a breakout room together and you had been running Ethical Angel, which you'd set up to help turn the needs of charities into learning experiences to ensure good causes had more sustainable support. So I think that mood chimed back then as it still does now. And we have stayed in touch and then, I don't know, sort of six, eight months ago, Alex got in touch to say, look, I can hear you and see you talking about AI and internal communication on LinkedIn and in your various social media feeds. And we're actually doing some interesting things in that space. So that kind of catalysed another conversation. And I guess against the backdrop of so much AI hype still and so much kind of grandiose but not enough detail of practical use cases and examples of where AI and generative AI can actually be used as a force for good. I wanted to bring Alex onto the podcast and chat with us today because obviously internal comms has a primary part to play in helping organisations adopt AI and generative AI in a healthful way that works for the betterment of humanity rather than not. So here we are. That's a very, very long intro. Welcome, Alex, and thank you very much for joining us today.

Alex Fahie (03:21)

Hi Cat, it's a pleasure.

Cat Barnard (03:23)

Well, you might not say that once I have asked you the first question. I was wondering if you might give us and our listeners a quick and if possible simplified overview of generative AI.

Alex Fahie (03:41)



42. Oh, sorry, that's the answer to a different question. **Generative AI, I mean**, Generative AI, simply, is using artificial intelligence to generate new content. So could be text could be images could be videos could be songs. And it's it's really come into I suppose public discourse in since 2022 when ChatGPT was made available by the OpenAI studio.

Alex Fahie (04:07)

And I think it's been a font for users to imagine how they could utilise these tools, these large language models, OpenAI is not the only one, of course, to do cool stuff, to make new things and potentially automate aspects of their work.

Cat Barnard (04:24)

Which of course, as I understand it, is particularly apposite for internal communicators whose job traditionally has been to relay information to staff within an organisation. And so to some extent, to quite a large extent, and I will defer to you, Dom and Jen, I'm working on the premise that a lot of that information transfer requires internal communicators to create compelling content, right? So that is the nub, that is a mainstay. So in actual fact, generative AI, and I am going to go deep here, could depose the work of the internal communicator. It could be the case that some organisations spin up in the future and don't see a need for an internal communicator because there is a tool to help them do it, right?

Jen Sproul (05:31)

I guess it's what you think about what internal communication is now versus what it was, I would say.

Cat Barnard (05:36)

and what it could be in the future.

Jen Sproul (05:39)

Internal comms, I guess, founding place was in the creation of content and taking information from senior management, distilling it, making it, and then distributing it to a workforce, which is, well, historically text-based, image-based, all the things that Alex has described. Yes, that's, I guess, an origin, but I guess the view is of what a modern organisation sees as internal communication, which I would say, I would argue is beyond traditional content creation.

Cat Barnard (06:12)

Yeah, but that's a really interesting, I mean, that does segue into another question that I had, which is, germane -ly, if it is possible to be germane about artificial intelligence and



generative AI, what role do you see it playing in business, Alex? Let's go back to generative AI, because I think that's probably most apposite for this particular community and audience, but how can generative AI help business?

Alex Fahie (06:39)

I'm going to answer by asking you a question first and then I'll follow up with hopefully some context. When do you think autopilot for aircraft was invented?

Cat Barnard (06:53)

Oh, I should know this. My father was an air traffic controller. Oh my God, pressure!

Alex Fahie (06:58)

When was the first autopilot? Go.

Dom (07:00)

I'm going to guess it was the 60s.

Cat Barnard (07:02)

I was gonna say 70s, 70s.

Jen Sproul (07:05)

I'll agree with them. I think they're probably, I would say, seventies.

Alex Fahie (07:10)

I think it was invented by someone called Sperryman in 1912. Yet we still have pilots. I mean, obviously in its sort of nascent state, it was a gyroscope which sort of managed to trim and sort of kept things stable. But also pilot has been around for a very, very long time, but we still require pilots. The technology has improved and will continue to improve, but we will still continue to need pilots. When we're talking about generative AI and AI and you know, just one thing we've got to recognise is generative AI, of which, let me just add at this point, I am by no means even a tiptoe of an expert. I am ingesting and assimilating all of these white papers and information, but my background is not in AI or particular generative AI, but it's fascinating as a topic. But it's just one technology that is evolving, and we've got all these different things that are developing.



But if we follow the mantra that we still today require pilots in planes, even though autopilot has been around for over 100 years, we probably still need to have internal communications team within companies. And I think there's two primary reasons there. On the content side or the content generation side. Yes, you can use generative AI to create images, create text. However, if the primary purpose of that is, say communications. I mean, this is public communication, I suppose, opposed to internal communications. But it's something to something to consider is that just because technology there, the context might not know may no longer make it relevant. So Google have recently said that they are going to actively not index information created by AI for searching. Now, that's quite significant if you consider that with the evolution of things like ChatGPT, a lot of the internet has suddenly become AI or a consequence of AI. And if that's no longer going to be indexed by Google, you're not going to appear in search results. So next time someone's looking for a hairdresser or cobbler in Croydon or Battersea, you won't show up if you use generative AI in your thing. So yes, the tool is there. But the same with the autopilot, you still need someone to recognise the context and how that can be brought to bear. Where I do think it's going to be interesting is around some of the automation. So McKinsey wrote a report midway through last year on the amount of traditional work tasks that are going to be automated. And they reckoned by 2030, 30 % of tasks will be, or 30 % of tasks that are currently done by humans will be automated. And so when you try to then sort of apply that to an internal communications role, if the primary purpose is to effectively and efficiently digest information from, say, management and make it accessible to the workforce, then you can start to get really interesting, really creative by what that actually means. You go from having good text with an email to being like, right, this person works in this particular department. This is how this information is going to affect them. And that's where you can start to use AI to infer messaging from one aspect and make it relevant to a different audience. Or to go even further, you can make it entirely personalised. But I still believe you're going to need that pilot in the cockpit to understand what's happening and critically when things aren't working.

Cat Barnard (10:28)

And for me, I think what I take away from that as I'm listening to you is that actually requires the pilot in the cockpit or the internal communicator in our context to be more educated around the capability of the tool, the potential of the tool. You know, there's quite a significant upskilling required for an internal communicator to use these tools in a way that optimally serves all stakeholders. You can't just, and I know I was talking about this glibly before we came on air. You can't just use ChatGPT to write a poem in the style of Snoop Dogg.

Alex Fahie (11:16)

Yes and no. I think we've got to stop thinking of generative AI as tools and products. And I think we've got to rethink of it as systems and process enhancements. So it's a reimagining of a series or a sequence of events as opposed to I need to have a new piece of content, I'm going to get chat GPT and bits of it. Of course you can use it for that. But in terms of how it's going to change things in the future. So this flash pan of or the sort of flash in the pan of



using it to create a poems in the style of Snoop Dogg is going to become anticoder pretty quickly. And it's going to be again as a in a professional context and looking at it as an internal communicator, having never been one. I imagine you would look at it in a sense of being like, well, how effective has this communication been? And you might look at the data and you might look at see how effectively policy has been interpreted or applied as opposed to something else. So the tool itself, if it's a good tool, it will be easy to use. But in terms of where the pilot will be sitting, I suppose they go from being, to use a different analogy, they go from being sort of a man with a hammer hitting machinery in an industrial style power plant to an engineer in a contemporary nuclear reactor. Their purpose is to interpret information and they are primarily there if something's not quite looking right and then needs a change as opposed to having to be sort of manually skilled in every aspect of the operation.

Cat Barnard (12:41)

So almost immediately for me that then, when I think about that, that is quite a significant shift from broadcaster to interpreter, evaluator of the feedback. Like what is, you know, to your point, what just happened? What was the impact of sending this crafted message to this person in this way at this time of day, that's hyper-personalised. So it isn't about, can I get this tool to do the grunt work? And it is about how can I leverage these systems and processes to really dive in with granularity to the efficacy of what we are actually here to do.

Alex Fahie (13:36)

Wouldn't that be cool?

Cat Barnard (13:37)

Wouldn't that be cool? That's like totally different level, I think.

Dom (13:41)

You're saying that Cat, to interrupt for a moment, it does seem to play very well to what we know internal communicators aspire to do or have aspired to do. Alex, many times on podcasts we've said that internal communicators need to be seen as more than crafters and drafters and the application of AI is one way in which we can, I think, do that or reinforce that. Because going back to your point about what is internal communication about, without being too poncy about it, it's about creating an environment for effective sharing of information within an organisation. And I think what I like about what you're saying about systems is that helps us see how we can use it to use AI to do that. But it'd be great to get a case study, if you like, of how you've done that. Now, your approach is Taisk, because I've asked that correctly. So what I like about this is you're putting AI into task, which is lovely.



Dom (14:32)

As a communicator, that's a fantastic play on words. But tell us Alex, I know you've been doing a lot of work in the educational sector. That's very much close to my heart. I'm married to a teacher who spends evenings preparing lessons. So anything I guess that can help with that certainly is going to be useful. So we can look at a practical application of GenAI. Talk us through please how you and Taisk have been helping the education sector to use it and apply the system properly.

Alex Fahie (15:00)

Sure, so taisk.com is kind of like a workshop. And our goal is to make AI and all of its various creations accessible for people to use to complete jobs or to complete tasks. That's why AI and task. You can use different large language models because different large language models have different specialities or increasingly we're seeing that as we hit a bit of a wall in what they're capable of delivering in terms of power. That's another point, but we can make these tools accessible for people to utilise. And so within the educational space where we're seeing some great great use is individual teachers using taisk to create AI bots, which are specific for completing certain sort of roles. So they could be, for example, lesson planning or essay marking or test creation or study buddies, which have very clear guardrails on for people so that they can access sort of mentoring or support outside of school hours. And that's kind of what I would describe as being, it's nice, it's helpful. It does a lot of good things to solve a lot of the challenges with teaching.

Primarily that which is stopping teachers from loving their occupation, which is something that's very, very sort of important to me. We've got to ensure that teachers can love what they do. And so we've got to remove all the stuff that's stopping them from being able to do that. So that's kind of how it works at the moment. It's used by hundreds of schools and teachers. We're now being used by businesses as well, as well as startups who are able to break the glass ceiling of not having sufficient funding or resources to build companies. But the next stage is getting AI to not just talk, but AI to do. And that's supremely exciting and something that we'll probably see coming into fruition in the next few months as well.

Dom (16:45)

Tell us a more about that Alex what sort of things could it help to do?

Alex Fahie (17:02)

So if we stay into the educational sort of mindset, if we break down tasks into instruction and outcome. You can then sort of apply this system or the system thinking to a wide range of problems that a teacher might face in their day to day. So let's take for example, you're a head teacher and one of your members of staff is called in sick, short notice, you've got to find cover because you can't tell the pupils to go home and wait till tomorrow. You've got to find cover straight away.



So you've got to find someone who's available. You've got to make sure that person is able to carry on the lessons, to take the curriculum on, to who understands the subject matter. And of course, that can be simpler or more complicated, depending on the nature of this class, nature of the stage of the pupils, etc, etc, etc. That's quite a serious, laborious task to do that sort of short term scheduling and empowerment without the teacher having understandably a total meltdown.

### Alex Fahie (18:02)

However, conceivably, what you could have is teacher calls in sick. They can't come to work. And that initiates a series of instructions that results in, hopefully, a perfect outcome. So those instructions could be teacher calls in sick, email gets received, email gets understood. So where generative AI is very exciting is not just its ability to create, but also to assess. So you've probably experienced it with ChatGBT. Tell me what you think of this. It's actually very good at that sort of inference. So it would be able to infer from that email what the problem is. The problem is that this teacher can't work and as a consequence, their classes aren't going to be covered. So we need to find someone else to cover it. So it can then look at the school's internal management system and say, these are the teachers available for these slots. Okay, so we've now found a teacher to cover the slots that the pupils need to have cover for. So that's one problem that's been solved. The next stage is we need to make that teacher feel comfortable.

### Alex Fahie (18:55)

And it might be a subject that they haven't taught. It might be a stage of the pupils progression or going through the curriculum that is unclear. So we've got to now take info. We've got to infer the data that we've got on that class, what those classes are, any special educational needs for pupils within that class, what stage they've got to in the curriculum, and provide a pack, say, to a teacher as they're walking into that classroom. So that's the instruction and outcome that's going on the background, its inference, its data, its functions and sort of series other things. But what does it look like in real life? Okay, an email comes in, a notification gets sent to the head teacher saying this person's sick, they can't come to work. A notification gets sent to another teacher saying, Hey, Bob, you're covering this lesson today. Here's your pack. You know, have a lot of fun. This is everything you need. Do you see what I mean? So that's where we're going. It's going from using AI in its sort of nascent state just to create stuff or assess stuff to using AI to infer instruction and then result in actions being taken.

### Dom (19:57)

So I'm fascinated to hear that and I like the way you said you're using GenAI to help teachers, those that maybe have fallen out of love with their role to fall back into it. So boiling that down, you're using it to take away some of the less attractive parts of the job, the rote, the grunt, to use your phrase, Cat said earlier, but also to do the inference, to speed processes up, to take some of the administrative burden off people. So it actually sounds a





very positive story. So last question I'll pass over to Jen. How are you finding teachers reacting to Gen AI?

Alex Fahie (20:29)

I think there's some different camps and I respect all these camps because I relate to them and I understand concerns and cynicism. Teachers are in an unfortunate position where they are the last to be given any significant educational technology. There are companies that market EdTech to schools but majority of EdTech that is provided to schools is we're probably not allowed to swear so I'll avoid it, but it's pretty useless. You know, the evolution of smart balls, for example, has that really resulted in any positive impact on pupil outcomes? And you consider how much money has been spent on everything from the blackboard to the whiteboard to the interactive board to the smart board to the now whatever board, you know, it doesn't matter. So I think there's a lot of cynicism because teachers being fed up with being told this is how to teach this is what you need to do.

Alex Fahie (20:16)

And so I think going into that environment with yet another product or another tool that's going to change teaching is quite rightly met with a degree of apathy. So there's definitely an element of that. I do think, however, though, once you get to the nub of the problem that's affecting teaching in particular, which is a love for the role because of the burden of admin, the burden of exams, the burden of special educational needs, sort of lesson planning, all this sort of stuff, which has been added to the roster that's turned something from being, you know, the most valuable job in the world to being one of the most bureaucratic professions that have ever existed. And as long as you can sort of focus on that and look to use these, these systems to rethink how, in this case, teachers can fall back in love with teaching or internal communicators can empower themselves to have a seat at the table of the company, whatever the mission is for that audience, that should be the focus of these technologies, not to replace but to empower.

Jen Sproul (22:19)

Alex, it's so fascinating you talk about it. And I think the thing that's resonating with me is the language you're using and the descriptions you're using about it. So if I think about where we are right now in internal comms with AI, from the conversations I have, the research I've done, the events I've gone to, it's still very much in a task-based mindset. As in, you know, I have got, I need to write a blog, I need someone to help me fulfill that task.

So I'm going to use ChatGPT to help me not have a blank piece of paper. Or the other scenario that we have is that we're trying to look at touch points and moments in an employee's life cycle of when we connect with them. And we get told a lot of things around channels and tools. So we create the content. So CEO has announcement, whatever. Well, I've got to put that into a language that then means that's understood by the employees. That's my outcome. So it's understood. But then I've got to make sure it reaches every single





employee irrelevant of their location. So then I need to look at my channels. So how do I make sure it goes to somebody that's on the road or offline or online? So you see how we have a very task -based approach, I think is what I'm trying to say. What I quite like is, do you think that there's that skill then around thinking rather than task, but in systems thinking? So we look at how we can automate that side of things and personalise that side of things so that therefore it drives better outcome and isn't so task based. I think hopefully that all came across.

Alex Fahie (23:56)

In order to shift the mindset, I think there's one thing that everyone needs to do. And that's to play. I think the sooner people can go out and play with things, whether that's looking at different channels or different models or different things, they can sort of use their own creative, their own understanding of use cases to explore and experiment and fail and try again and failing and so on and so on and so forth until they recognise the value of this as a system or system thinking as opposed to as you say as a task. And so, for example, you know, when we're talking about channels and audiences and touch points and all that sort of stuff, I mean, effectively, we're using terminology, which takes us maybe a couple of steps further away from the human and the human interaction that we were discussing earlier, that actually the system could replace or bring back.

And so I think back to my first job, you know, my first job going into an office, I didn't know what to wear. I didn't know who to ask with what to wear. Like, do I call people sir? Or like, Mr. Or is it Bob? You know, those questions that you wake up at two o'clock in the morning about in a mad sweat, having no opportunity to understand them.

Alex Fahie (27:05)

That's a very human emotion, it would be wonderful to have some way of reaching out and getting clarity on some of those questions in a way which wasn't judgmental, you can't go and ask your new boss, you know, stuff like that. Because, you know, especially on your first day, you don't want to, you don't want to be sort of considered to be what you actually are, which is totally new to all of this. So I think that at the centre of everything that we do, whether it's teaching, whether it's business, whether it's building companies, whether it's educating groups of people is humanism and the ability to affect people at that level. And I think if we can look at these new technologies as a way to empower those or trigger those sort of emotional points, by experimenting and playing and finding ways to create maybe chatbots that people can interact with or avatars that they can talk to or as simple as a WhatsApp number that members of the graduate programme can text at one o'clock in the morning without fear of getting any pushback. I think that would be super exciting. But that's going to take your audience to experiment and to play with. It's not going to take a technologist like us or the company to provide a solution for. We need to provide an environment where people can play.



Jen Sproul (26:21)

I agree and I think that what I think that I would take away from away from that as well is going back to what is the desired human emotion outcome that we're trying to achieve to then think about then systems thinking to build that but even with all that in mind I like it Alex we're trying to go for it you we're all about the humans we care about people right about the human future and I'm a big advocate the how we talk and deal with people is and interact as humans is fundamental to good business. But with all that in mind, what are the risks then associated with this? Say, is it all perfect? Where does it go wrong? What do we need to be really mindful of?

Alex Fahie (26:57)

I think that the two ones that really stand out to me are data and labels. I think both of them are potentially very valuable but also very dangerous. I think technology has always been a double-edged sword, whether it's fire, it's so obvious, it can create stuff, but it could also burn stuff, to sort of more modern interventions like nuclear weapons. Einstein's four-year relativity lauded, rightly so, was actually a foundation for development of nuclear weapons, one that Einstein himself would take to his grave, feeling very remiss about. So that there's always going to be this dichotomy of technology and I think data labels are the two obvious ones in this space. Data because any data is sensitive but incredibly valuable. So for example, if you could effectively capture every aspect of data on your workforce, you would under arguably be able to engineer the best or the most optimised messaging through the most effective channels at the most effective time. The risk of course is that as soon as you collate that data, there is a risk of that data being utilised by people that you don't want it to be utilised of it being leaked of it being lost. So that's that's definitely something to consider around sort of data as one thing that we take super seriously at Taisk. I think the next is around labels, you know, we as a species, again, as humans, we have an intent desire to try to understand things. And one of ways that we do that is by labelling, you know, millennials, Gen X, Muslims, Christians. I mean, obviously, there's all of these different ways that we can dissect demographics. And from a marketing perspective, or from an internal communication case, again, it's super powerful, you can use it because you can break people down into groups and you can test different things on different people to try and extract a better outcome. But I also am inherently fearful of labels in a similar way to data. As soon as we start to label things, particularly in an AI context, we potentially forget the individual within that tribe or within that group.

Alex Fahie (29:00)

So yeah, I think those are the two dangerous things. I don't think the danger is necessarily in the technology. I don't think we're going to have crazy robots that are going to take over the world, or at least if they do, we won't know about it. I think there are some challenges around the development of the technology transistors getting to such a stage that they are. A wall's wall and stuff like that, but that's not really your question, is it? But yeah, so I think data and labels, I think, are the two big risks because they are absolutely intrinsically necessary for these systems to operate. But in labelling groups of people and collating all of this data and



how they interact with things, we create a risk that perhaps didn't exist a few hundred years ago.

Cat Barnard (29:41)

I think this point about labelling is so fascinating for a couple of reasons. One is, I think you're absolutely right. I totally agree with the sentiment that we like to label, we like to know the parameters of anything. We like to be able to understand the edges, but none of us like to be labelled. And that's quite an interesting one. So we like to label people, but we don't like ourselves to be labelled. And the other thing that I think, there's a couple of things. The other thing is human beings are messy, complex, creatures who are in a perpetual state of becoming. So the label that may be assigned to you in March may not be apt for the person that you have become by July. And then the other thing, which is something that Seth Godin, I feel like we always bring Seth back into our podcast, but he talked about in one of his books, and I think on one of the episodes that he came to chat with us about, which is that, as the internet proliferated, we were able to find our tribe, the people that we identified with, who shared similar interests to us. And as that happened, another thing happened, which was that those tribes then fragmented off into ever more bespoke and customised versions. So I'm going to use a really terrible 1980s pop scenario. We all used to be Duran Duran fans, but when we all found our cluster of Duran Duran fans, suddenly it wasn't enough to be a Duran fan. You had to then identify, am I a Simon Le Bon, am I a John Taylor, am I an Andy Taylor? And then when you've gone into that little tiny pocket, then it was, well, did I like Simon Le Bon before Rio or after Rio? And so these kind of micro customisations manifest. And I think that is true. If you look at some of the sociocultural issues that we're grappling with right now, you know, across the developed world, when you look at gender identity, when you look at any kind of identity issues, there is this problem of, of labelling to your point, because you might be quite happy to be labelled this, but not that. And then, and then the final thing, which I really do not know the answer to, and we've come back, we have discussed, I don't know whether it's on air, Jen, or off air, but you know, then comes this big contentious issue of intersectionality, which is, if I understand it properly, acknowledging ourselves for all these little labels that we would assign to ourselves and then making sure that there are cohesive narratives that bind us together as much as divide us off into these tiny little segmented pieces. I think that is a really interesting paradox because on the one hand, the labelling is really potent, isn't it? But on the other, this idea that we are complex, arbitrary, somewhat temperamental creatures who might not like the labels that have been assigned to us as soon as we discover that those labels have indeed been assigned. I'm not entirely sure how the technology gets its head around any of that.

Jen Sproul (33:15)

But just to jump in, I think that as well, but I think it also comes down to, going back to Alex's earlier point as well, is there is that issue and there is that manifestation, but what is the goal? What are we trying to create when we do things? Is it that we want everyone to feel valued, to be involved, to feel heard, to feel something? Or have a shared understanding or a shared goal. So how can we do that through the appropriate ways? And yeah, I mean, I



think audience segmentation was what changed marketing. So it's trying to adopt that to some degree, but I don't know, Alex, what those are, but I think I would come back to what we're trying to get to, but I'm sure you got something smarter to say than that.

Alex Fahie (33:58)

No, not at all. I agree with you. I think, you know, that if you have a positive goal, then the likelihood of using these systems is going to be a positive one. But if your goal is nefarious or bad, then you have very potent tools to manipulate and encourage you know, Facebook captures 52,000 different data points in every single user.

They do that for a very clear reason. It's to get what they think is the right sort of content in front of you to secure whatever goal that might be. And if you know, if you apply the same sort of thought pattern to generative AI, so the ability to be able to create new content that might trigger a particular demographic or a particular labour or a particular group to sway an election, say, then we've got to think of that as well. So I think to go back to the original question, what are the big risks? I think data labels are a stick and risk. I think there's a valuable place for internal communicators to become not just the leaders and educators base, but also potentially the arbitrators of saying, you know, potentially if the management is like, this is our goal, you know, make it happen using all these amazing tools to basically kind of be the voice of reason or the voice of sort of ethical considerations. No, that's not something that we should be communicating. Even though we can, we shouldn't.

Dom (35:15)

Alex, let's look at that in a bit more detail, please. Because actually I'm quite heartened from the conversation so far about the applications of the systems around Gen AI and the positives they're going to bring and how communicators can use them. But you've also highlighted and there were some downsides to it too. So if we say that internal communicators have a key role to play in helping organisations use GenAI in a healthy and positive way what are the key things you think internal communicators should be doing in order to ensure that it is used healthily within an organisation?

Alex Fahie (35:49)

Play play play play understand, you know experiment, test things. I mean use a workshop, you know Taisk is obviously a workshop, but there are probably others where you can play with different models to secure different outcomes and I think from that you will be able to recognise both the good and the bad. You'll be able to see how an AI that's been trained on every book on most effective sales ever is probably going to be pretty effective at manipulating certain demographics if it's got the data. But in the same way, an AI with the outcome of making, say, minorities or graduates coming into workplace feel safe on day one,



it's going to have those positive outcomes as well. So definitely play to understand these tools. I'm not talking about ChatGPT, I'm talking about the broader technologies. And then create a con like not to create a conscience that doesn't sound right, but almost sort of as an internal communicator, the role is to understand what the organisation's conscience is. What is it that we think is appropriate? What are the goals that we will push for internal communications? Which are the goals that we shouldn't, which were the ones that should go to committee for a sign-off, which are the ones that I can say absolutely not, we're not going to push this messaging, because communication is of course the most powerful tools that humanity's ever created, and so it needs to be protected both in a cool commercial setting, but also in a wider one, and of course the internal communications teams are the ones that are responsible for that.

Dom (37:23)

Just two points and I'll pass up to Cat about that. One is if we're going to play we need to have less fear and I still think there's a lot of fear around you know dancing with the devil to mix our metaphors and using Gen AI. I think that's a very heartening thing there. And the second thing is about being able to have conversations about it. Again I get the impression sometimes maybe because it's a new area and some of us feel we don't have enough information that we don't feel confident having conversations about it. So I think that's something else I've taken from what you've said. It's okay to have a conversation, it's okay to explore possibilities, it's okay not to know.

Alex Fahie (37:55)

And no one knows where this is going. The people who do don't know anything that the people have been working in AI or machine learning for decades are the first ones to put their hands up and say that they don't know. They don't understand, you know, that Mr. Suleyman wrote this wonderful book called The Coming Wave. He was one of the founders of DeepMind, which got bought by Google and has gone on to be a key part of that AI sort of engine or R & D engine. And he writes that AI is a terminology that engineers who work in AI, cool stuff that hasn't been turned into software yet. So I think we need to dispel the myth that this is a product in itself that has been created and can be understood. It's a system, it's a broad range of technologies, which are converging together to create a new way for us to do things. Generative AI and ChatGPT is a tiny aspect of that. So yeah, I think the conversation should be, yes, absolutely encouraged. But I think we can afford to be more humble in going into these conversations, admitting that no one actually really knows how this is going to have an impact, what it's capable of delivering, what it could be in a few years time. But what we do know is how we might want to use it. We can apply that understanding or that discussion around what we think is appropriate, what we think is not appropriate. How we want to encourage, how we want to empower, how we might want to replace and how we might want to utilise. So I think the conversations that can be had now are ones that don't necessarily need to be built on an AI, you know, in the covers expertise.



Dom (39:28)

It's about focusing on the outcomes you want. Focus on where we need to get to rather than focusing on the system itself, which I know seems an obvious thing to say, but I think we get sometimes we get blinded by the systems and the tools. Yeah, definitely.

Alex Fahie (39:43)

I think we get blinded by the products, you know, like it's there's a lot of people flogging AI stuff at the moment. I mean, I and I appreciate the irony coming from me. But there's a lot of AI privatisation going on. And in fact, we've got to almost forget about the product. So jump over the product, ignore the products, because what's going to happen is this ability to change the way that systems operate by utilising not just generative AI or AI as we currently understand it, but a range of different solutions which are going to make these tasks easier to complete and change the way that we interact with each other and how organisations can be productive.

Cat Barnard (40:23)

So to bring this all together then, I think what's really interesting is that we're recording this conversation in the same month that The Institute of Internal Communication has celebrated its 75th anniversary. And for those who didn't get the memo, but I'm assuming most have, the Institute of Internal Communication started its life in 1949 in the aftermath of the Second World War. And it started out as the British Association of Industrial Editors, where, if I'm not mistaken, the key, the primary skill sets were journalistic and were you know, the point and purpose of the professionalisation was to bring layers of professionalisation to the writing profession. And those are very deep roots of the institute and the profession. But obviously, as we've been celebrating or preparing to celebrate its anniversary, it's also posed the question, where could internal communication be 75 years from now?

Cat Barnard (41:25)

So looking back with 75 years, looking forward 75 years. And what I feel I've taken away from today's conversation is an overarching theme that when we can look beyond tools towards systems and when we can look beyond tactics, that is indeed when we can become inherently more strategic because what we are looking at is an entire recalibration of how information and knowledge, and I would throw into that how data becomes information, becomes knowledge, becomes insight, becomes wisdom. I didn't make that up by the way, I'm not gonna, I know where I got that reference from, but it wasn't me that made it up. But all of those things, how do we as internal communicators optimally transfer and exchange data, information, knowledge, et cetera, within our organisations in pursuit of a stated goal or outcome? That's the play, isn't it? That's the high level.



opportunity. So that's what I've taken away from it anyway. But Alex, thank you so much for joining us. And if you were to cast your gaze over everything that we've talked about today, what one action would you say an internal communicator ought to take from today's discussion?

Alex Fahie (43:00)

Go play.

Jen Sproul (43:02)

I'm going to say I like Go Play and I've been trying to not say this the whole podcast but I'm going to say it now. When you were talking about autopilot invented in 1912 I just had in my head, does anybody remember the film Airplane?

Jen Sproul (43:19)

That was the idea of a human autopilot. So it always needed a human. That's what I'm going to say.

Dom (43:26)

I'm also delighted about the fact we've brought in Airplane and Duran Duran. No one can accuse us of not being topical.

Jen Sproul (43:31)

Totally.

Cat Barnard (43:34)

We have to make it a theme. Alex, thank you so, so much for joining us. I think it's been a really, really interesting, broad reaching conversation. And given the pace at which things are evolving, I would like to say at some point, you'll have to come back and we'll have to regroup and see where we're all at. But in the meantime, thank you very, very much.

Alex Fahie (43:53)

Thank you.