



Transcript for S10 E4 Unethical AI: considerations for healthy AI adoption with Dr Naeema Pasha

Cat Barnard (00:43)

Welcome to a brand-new episode of the Future of Internal Communication podcast. I am Cat Barnard and I'm joined by Jen Sproul and Dominic Walters, and today we are going to have a conversation about AI and ethics. I'm delighted to welcome Dr Naeema Pasha, who has got a lot to share with us in this field. Naeema set up and led the World of Work Institute at Henley Business School where she remains a visiting fellow and she examines the future of work and the ethical impact of artificial intelligence on work, workers and workplaces. So, at the World of Work Institute, her film 'Privacy Limited' explored the ethics of the use and effect of facial recognition technology in UK society, and I'm not sure how many of us think about that on a day-to-day basis, but that is very topical.

She's also undertaken groundbreaking research on race equity in UK businesses. And her research was called the Equity Effect and has been cited, if I'm not mistaken, by the Bank of England quite recently. So that's a big applause there. She now works as an independent consultant with various organisations and institutions on the topics of artificial intelligence, diversity, and also future skills, which again is something that we perhaps don't focus enough attention on, bearing in mind the impact of artificial intelligence, what future skills will we all need? So without further ado, I am delighted to welcome you, Naeema.

Naeema (02:29)

Thank you so much. So good to be here, thank you.

Cat Barnard (02:32)

Awesome. So, I'm going to start with a big lofty question, principally because I think it means different things to different people. But tell us what you mean when you think about ethics.

Naeema (02:45)

Thank you. I was thinking about this because, you know, being invited on to speak about AI and ethics and there are a lot of people who are AI ethicists who call themselves "AI Ethicists" and I don't think I would call myself a part of that lofty group of people.

The perspective I take Cat, as you'll know, as you just talked about - is that because coming from a business school background, coming from leading teams and coming from



particularly looking at diversity and the application of technology and looking at the skills we need. What I'm really looking at is how leaders can make decisions that they feel are fair, reasonable, and the term that we're using more and more business now is "good". You know, we look at good work. What does good work look like? What does a good organisation look like? So in that sense, I think ethics to me is about when we've got this set of maybe we call it morality, moral principles about how we make our decisions and actions. And some of it could be about right and wrong, what's fair and unfair and those kinds of things. But sometimes it isn't as polarised as that because the easiest decisions are when we can see a distinct kind of - well, that is clearly bad and that's clearly good. What's harder now for leaders is when it's much closer, what is good and good, and where do we go? What is bad and bad, where do we go? Those are the difficult decisions that leaders face.

I think that's where I go, and looking at, you know, coming in and doing talks on ethics, what I try and look at is - how I'm looking at it in terms of an applied way - is that we're looking at an organisation. You mentioned the Bank of England. Indeed, it was really good to see Andrew Bailey talk about the equity effect research. And that's an example of where they were thinking, well, as a bank, traditional, I don't know, is it 300 years old? I'm going to guess something - let's go with 300 years old-ish institution, Lloyds of London, that kind of age of organisation. When they're thinking of who we are, what are we as an organisation? How are we addressing the kind of monetary kind of - all the things they're doing as a central bank?

What does that mean? How do we have to be? So then they considered, well, actually for us to sort of be effective and understand diversity is really critical. So we have to look at how we started developing and it was race equity that was the research I did. This was important to them in terms of their ethical stance on diversity. So that's how you bring it together. I think it's like looking at the values, looking at the direction and really asking the question, "what is the purpose of the organisation?" Then it's much clearer.

Otherwise, Cat, I don't know what you all think – and Jen, whether you think sometimes we can get a bit ethereal, a bit hyper philosophical, I think tech firms tend to do that about ethics - I don't know what your thoughts are?

Cat Barnard (05:37)

So I just want to chime in. I think what is so interesting about that is that the requirement for modern leaders is to take a more panoramic viewpoint on the multiple trends that are transforming work and creating game changing shifts and undercurrents and practising the art of making good decisions that are underpinned by some kind of moral code in the absence of uniformity. Like no business now has the ability to drag and drop something that has been tried and tested elsewhere because contextually they are so situationally different with different sets of stakeholders, different value propositions.



So it is to me, you know, it's a really interesting kind of balance, isn't it? Because I think, and again, love to hear your points on this, but I think it's probably reasonable to say that our academic focus has skewed towards the sciences in the last 15 years, whereas philosophy is very rooted in the humanities, therefore more akin perhaps to art than science. And it is this balance of working out what is the right thing to do, perhaps sometimes in the absence of hard data to guide us. You know, you have to use your gut intuition to steer yourself, your organisation, your team on what is right and what is wrong, whilst maintaining some kind of focus on, and I know you and I have talked about this off mic, unforeseen consequences.

Naeema (07:38)

Yes - I probably disagree with you a bit, but I'd love to hear what Jen and Dom think.

Jen Sproul (07:43)

I think the thing for me, and I go back, sometimes I come at this in probably the more simplistic way, and I know there's lots of nuances and it can be very emotional, but when I think about it in the background that I've had, if something is legal, decent and honest, okay, you know, which is kind of the way of thinking, are we doing it? Now the problem you have where I think ethics and the word legal come a little bit challenging together, and I think it leads us in the path of AI because that's why regulation exists and etc. So I think when your ethics comes in, in that point of decent and truthful, and is it then within the morality of what we have set? And that has a subjective nature to it. And it does make it different. And I think that within the context of AI, where we struggle to place this potentially in that world of legal, what can you regulate and what can you not?

And I think ethics calls up a morality in you that means you can do something outside of the law, but is it really morally right? Is it truthful and is it decent? I think would be the way I would look at it as well.

Dom (08:51)

I think I'd agree with that. I think the law is one thing and what's fair is not necessarily the same thing. So I think ethics have to be about what's fair and use the word "good" as well. But what I would say - perhaps as a communicator - I think the word ethics is incredibly unhelpful in many organisations because it's a trigger word. If you say to someone "let's talk about ethics", most people think that's not for me, I don't work in ethics, I'm not a philosopher. So I think one of the challenges for us as communicators is how do we talk about ethics in a way that's not being condescending, it's about making it as accessible as



possible, I think. So I think that what we've just done is actually part of that process is breaking down the concept of ethics into things that relate to people's work.

Naeema (09:30)

I think it's an incredibly unhelpful term, and a lot of terms that tech firms have come up with, AI ethics, hallucinations if we go into other kinds of things when we mean like mistakes or things that have just gone a bit pear-shaped or wrong. I think they are helpful and I think with ethics - going back to your point Cat about being pro-science and humanities, you get different perspectives in each. Humanities type of thinking has given rise to some of the things that we're now fighting against in terms of EDI, you know, equity and diversity where people's ethics or moral stance was around, you know, this kind of thing should happen. We still see it now. We're in the middle of an election in the UK, depending when you watch this. But where people are coming up with their particular thoughts and all kinds of things, gender recognition, all those kind of things where people feel themselves, I am taking an ethical and moral stance on something and that has come through from millennia of thinking and more, you know, particularly more recently. And you said in the last 15 years perhaps shifted with STEM, I guess, with STEM education. I think there's more emphasis on STEM education, but from what I can see a lot of STEM education is still kind of trying to include this sort of broad round thinking and some of the module delivery, certainly where I was in Henley and University Reading and the university sector. So it seems it feels a bit broader, but there's a lot to do, I think, in terms of how we're good. And I think what Dom's point about the way we look at this.

And that's kind of why I'm a bit reluctant to say I'm an AI ethicist, because I don't see myself, but I do see myself in terms of working with organisations and leaders about working out how they make effective decisions and working out what they might feel is the right decision. You never know that until perhaps later on, unintended consequences, as we said, Cat. But looking at how you weigh those things up and look at what you do is against, I think, purpose, who you're here for, and how you can sort of justify some of those things, but you know, we're in complex times and people making quite complex decisions about what they're going to do around the world.

Jen Sproul (11:39)

I think it's such a great point to start from, isn't it? And I think that word complex is really important to... you want to try and find something to simplify something so complex, but it's very hard to simplify something like this in a way. And I think that, you know, we sit here with IoC and I know Naeema, we've spoken about this a few times as well - we were really trying to understand what AI means for us as the way we deploy it to communicate. So



we enable communication through AI in the workplace, but B; how we guide our workplaces for healthy adoption of AI within the wider workforce.

So I think that there is two sides of it. And what we've done so far in reaching out with the community and with members - and IC professionals at large is that there isn't a fear of it. There's a, I don't thoroughly understand it yet. I'm intrigued and I think it can give us lots of opportunity to create efficiencies, to do things differently, to have more time for the human work, which, you know, communicating in every moment is a human endeavour. If we see an email as non-human, then everything has a human interaction, perhaps. But I guess what they mean by that is more of that strategic work and more of that advisory work as opposed to, you know, that kind of monotony kind of machine that communication can become. And they say, there's opportunities and it can do creative things and it's going to really help me - but I'm not entirely sure how it all works, I don't really understand. There are technology platforms coming at us all the time saying they've got the latest AI that's going to solve all of our challenges.

And so we're sort of walking into this, I think, with not a lot of sight or understanding about its potential implications. And I think that's the major concern. I think the large concern within the membership community from a communication point of view is around security and data and what that all means. But I think there's lots more questions as we start to understand more about AI that we need to answer that perhaps come from a more ethical stance. Like, even though we could do it this way, is it right to do it this way? Is it good to do it that way? So I guess, with that in mind, what do you think are some of those ethical risks that are associated with the adoption of generative AI, particularly in AI at work for communication, but also any purpose an organisation is looking to deploy it?

Naeema (14:15)

Yes, well Cat and I was discussing, I think just at the weekend about job losses in newspapers where generative AI is being adopted more so. And that's just in IoIC, I've been talking to people in marketing organisations, big retailers, talking about their adoption of generative AI, developing their own or adopting, you know, some of the large co-pilot, and so on out there.

I'll go back a bit in order to come forward to answer this - when I set up the World of Work Institute at Henning Business School, super excited, and that was about eight years ago. And I'd studied around artificial intelligence from a doctorate, I looked at it and artificial intelligence, I think started, well, the term is coined back in 1956, I think 1955-56, when they had that conference when people got together in America from MIT and other places to talk about this. And then things started developing, then it all went a bit quiet again. And then we had that resurgence as computer power grew. And then it went a bit quiet again. And now it's had a massive push forward with generative AI, which has had millions, I think



billions probably, I'm probably more accurate talking about billions being invested into it. So you think this is exciting technology, because it can come in and do so many things.

(15:32)

But the unintended consequences of this, I think, haven't been considered because people, the tech firms are so excited to come out with something and being something, you know, which is the way with technology, all technology, Steve mentioned, to now to say, well, this is great. What can we do? What is the impact of this? And if we see impact, and I remember when I talked to MBA students with the first models of generative AI before it came out commercially. It was concerning then, I asked them to sort of start considering what's going to be the impact here, what do you think? And everyone was like, well, this is going to be concerning on a few things. So this is on the ethics side of it. I sound like I'm quite agitated and I feel this way. I am concerned about one major concern is bias, and that's because of my work in diversity and inclusion - but I think even if I wasn't working in diversity inclusion, I think all of us should be concerned about this.

You can do a little test of people watching this. You can just go on to an image generator using AI and write in, you know, show me some pictures of beautiful women and handsome men. This is a Washington Post article I saw recently about this, which I thought, okay, let's try this out. And all the images are quite Western centric features. I think there was only 9% of black faces came into that. So you might think, well, that's because it's fed and it's learning off the internet, and that that's how it works.

The consequences of this will be major. The consequences on people looking at this, the communities around the world, the global majority will be thinking, are these the standards that we should go for? There could be developments around this technology that have guardrails around it. And that's what I talked about in the movie I did on facial recognition technology. Because again, super concerned about this. It's got poor recognition, the technology at the time of doing the film, and I think not hugely in developed for recognising black women, for example.

And the technology is not strong enough to detect it that well. And yet being adopted by Metropolitan Police, by the New York police and so on, you know, thinking surely this could have some negative impact. I think it's going to be used in the Olympics and in the Euros. It was used in the Champions League. And so, you know, you have it in context where people, there'll be a sign up saying it's being used somewhere. But how do we all feel about this technology scanning our face? How do we feel? There's an organisation that we worked with, we did the movie called Big Brother Watch about how people feel about their face being scanned and put against databases. When I did that movie, we worked with an organisation working in retail, it's a great movie if you get the chance to watch it, super pleased with it, called Privacy Limited. It's a nice get the popcorn out and sit down and watch it. But we worked with retailers and this comes to ethics, which work with retailers.



So retailers wanting to limit shoplifting. Ethically, we don't think people should steal- obviously. So that's a strong ethical argument. This is where we get complications around ethics in AI. So we don't want people to steal. We want to prevent people from stealing products in a store. And we want to prevent harm coming to retail staff. That's a strong ethical argument.

So we could say, well, OK, because that's such a strong ethical argument, let's introduce facial recognition technology into our retail stores, which it has been. And the retail store in question was using it to pre-empt store security, being able to stop people saying, this person, we've facially recognised them, they're on our database. And we remember it's not that accurate, approach them, follow them around the store. So if they want to pick up a bit of cheese for their lunch, and they're going to pay for it. But if we pre-emptively start thinking, well, they could be up to no good and we're following them out. What is the ethical stance around that from a business perspective, from a social perspective, from a civil liberties perspective as well?

So that's where I think when we talk about the ethics, again, I'm not an ethicist as such, not one of those people who thinks that way. I'm looking at it from a particular civil responsibilities, freedom and business perspective and what leaders think. I'm happy to take a stance on that - I don't think we should be doing that. I don't think we should be tracking that. And some of the technology firms looking at facial recognition technology, saying, well, we're going to put it in cars so we can see if someone's falling asleep. And that will alert somebody saying, right, quickly put the alarms on because it's going to recognise when we start drifting off and having a sleep and it will recognise that and then it will alert the driver. But what they've also said has, you know, from a crime prevention perspective, we could alert the police saying these people could be up to no good in their car, you know, and we could perhaps do something to say they could stop coming in.

One of the biggest things which we talked about in the movie is that it's used a lot in recruitment, a couple graduate recruitment, large volume recruitment and facial recognition technology making assessments on what your personality is and whether you'd fit in. And number one, ethics of using that in that way. Number two, is it accurate? Can it really tell that? And number three, how do you know what personality is that ethically right as well? Because it goes quite strong with extrovert, extrovert team player, that kind of thing. Is that always the best thing? Or maybe you need somebody who's an introvert thinker because you need to have a reflective practice in this job. So those are just some of the things - sorry, I'm getting carried away with that one, but I haven't kept going on about job displacement and other kinds of things that we could think about with some of the ethical challenges, I think with AI adoption.



Cat Barnard (21:34)

I just want to cut in because, and I will try and find it for the show notes, but there was a really interesting BBC documentary that was made several years ago about the use of facial recognition technology specifically in interviewing. And it was heartbreaking actually, because it was just showing the extent to which the technology works for very vanilla faces, but you know, it doesn't work for people that are neurodiverse. And actually, the documentary exposed the use of that facial recognition technology in deciding, and it was a well-known makeup brand, I think, as I recall, in deciding who to make redundant.

Naeema (22:14)

Yes, that's exactly right. It was and they went to court and so on. And there's a firm that says actually, we've adapted our technology to say we can work around neurodiverse well, and so on and so forth. But I have to say when we did a short survey of students using going through this process of facial recognition technology video interviewing, they hated it. It was depersonalised. And this is another aspect of ethics of AI when we think it's proficient, it's productive, it's going to help us improve our output by 20% or something. The experience of people, say candidates, say if you all thought that's how we've got to get recruited these days and we won't meet the person or the team until much later. It's a soulless experience.

Dom (23:01)

Can I play devil's advocate for a moment? because you could argue that we never respond that well to new ideas and new technology. There's always some fear about it. So you mentioned the steam engine - I think I remember from a long time ago now when the first steam locomotive was introduced, people said any speed over 15 miles an hour, you'll be asphyxiated and we'll all die. I remember my parents warning me about using microwave ovens because there were stories that they would cook my innards. These are silly examples, but the point I'm getting at is you could argue that we always look for the worst in new technologies and new ideas. And sometimes we make those fears bigger than the reality. And so I guess in some ways we need to focus on what actually are some of the most concerning risks. Not all risks are equal. So it'd be great to get from your expert position, all the studying you've done about this - when it comes to AI, generative AI and all the things related to it, what do you think are the most concerning, the most pressing ethical risks that we should be focusing on?



Naeema (24:03)

Of course, well the first thing is, I've been reading - since moving into this kind of way of thinking, I've been looking a lot more at the Luddite movement, which we talk about Luddites, kind of being anti-technology and actually Luddites are a group of people who are concerned again about the impact on skills, the impact on jobs, the transparency, and the ethical practices of businesses coming in. So that was number one.

And the other thing was fear of change in technology. I think that's again what the Luddites said. That's what you say about us. Actually, we're a bright group of people and they were very highly skilled. We're not scared of technology. We've been through technological change and I'd argue that about us because we do get told we are fearful of change and we're fearful of technology. When, as you just said, we've been through microwaves, we've been through cars, we've been through all sorts, we're used to it actually. And as humans, we do find change concerning to begin with, but then we're also a very adaptive species. So actually I think we get a little bit gaslit that we're told that we're scared of, we're fearful of change, and we're fearful of technology, because on the whole, we're not. What we are perhaps concerned about, that past experience has taught us, is about technological leaders being ethical and strong and making decisions that are in our interest.

And in the UK, we're just going through the court cases around the post office where we were told the computer said, yes, I've just bought some clothes from online retail - I've just given you an example, I've got two of the four things, and they said, well, our AI systems have cameras and they could see four things go into the bag - you have received them. I have only two. And I said, well, your system might be wrong and they go, it's going to get complicated for me to do that. The system is wrong, so what I'm concerned about, what we're all concerned about, we can accept technology when we feel it's in our interest. And when Jen said we don't understand it enough, we don't know the impact and where we're going. That part hasn't been explained because we don't know that yet. So in terms of generative AI, I think, yes, it's fantastic. It can bring great things and it can reduce time to do things. But let me give you another example of why I'm concerned.

I was at an educational conference where somebody was talking about how generative AI in a positive way has improved teaching and learning in the organisation because it's enabled people who are teaching to do the set of slides on generative AI because they used to have this person, this lecturer who used to have difficulties in getting things done in time. So now it goes to whatever - chat GPT or whatever and says, can you produce content for slides on this topic? And there they are, boom, cut and paste straight into the PowerPoint and presented. Why do we then need a teacher for that then?

Why could not the students say, I need to know about molecular biology, you know, polymer chemistry or something, I need to set a slides, make it simple, make it in the style



of this and make me that. Then you can read those notes. Why are we then having a person educating at the front who perhaps has much deeper knowledge and can bring things forward. So the argument is that will take away from teaching because of the workload for teachers to do the things they need to do. That is what they need to do. And also the other side of it is the trust associated with that. When, when they're presenting the slides, you're the student in the audience. It's not even their content. I could get that. And, and in HR, another conversation with HR managers, they said, it's fantastic. We're really using generative AI to really enable our employee engagement. What we do, we look at the data that's coming from you know, our previous conversations, we put that through chat GPT with previous conversations with an employee - we put that content through, we ask it to pull out the salient things, we ask it to pull out the kind of comments and prompts that we need to speak to the employee over, we asked to do that, and then we present that back and it helps us, you know, sort things out. So I'm thinking I'm the employee thinking I'm the employee there. Okay, you've used that to help you condense it, but you as my manager - surely we've got a relationship that you'd be talking to me saying, listen, I'm really pleased about such and such, but we really need to work on such and such, especially if you want to go to the next grade up or whatever it is. So it comes back to when we look at something like generative AI, going back to what Jen and Cat said if it's taking away the job that we should be doing, then where does that leave us or them or whoever? That's what my concern is.

Dom (28:52)

I'm just picking up on that so I'll pass that to Cat. Because as you're talking, I'm thinking, well, OK - those views sometimes people have because their view of what the job is limited. So if you think a teacher's job is purely imparting information, then you may think, well, absolutely, it can be done by generative AI. But if you think that a teacher's job is to help understanding, is to put in context, is to make things relevant, is to help people think about stuff and get their own position - and it's only part of the job. So I guess another issue you're raising there is one of the problems with generative AI is our view of jobs. And therefore, we might think it does more of the job than perhaps it does.

Naeema (29:31)

I think you're right in terms of what we think of our jobs, and it isn't just about that content. We take teaching or HR or all of the other things that are going on - and those are very people orientated jobs. But what I'm talking about specifically on that is the trust. If we present that back to say, I haven't done these slides, this is produced by Generative AI or I haven't done this employee review, performance review, this was done by a Generative AI, then you have a trust piece.



And this is going back to ethics - you either have to reveal that or you have to pretend it's yours and then you're losing some of your credibility. Applying that, yeah, of course, there's more details underneath that we would hope that you'd come in. But if you haven't generated it entirely yourself, then in terms of applying the teaching and learning that's come through from that set of slides, you really have to push a little bit further and, you know, take things into a different way. And it's lauded in this organisation that we're talking about here. And I just thought, I don't know if I feel that's comfortable, but that's where I am at the moment.

Cat Barnard (30:34)

There's a kind of aura of “transactionality” about it all, isn't there? You know, if this, then that, which of course is the basic premise of an algorithm, a rule. Things that bubbled up in my mind as you were describing that were, it's interesting, you know, to make the assumption that teaching is diminished to quite literally the transfer of information from person A to person B, whereas I think we would all agree based on our lived experience of leading workshops and development programmes, I personally think every single time that I deliver, my thinking evolves because I strive to run interactive workshop sessions where the people that I am aspiring to educate feed back to me their situational context and offer up their thoughts and opinions, which moves my thinking on. And presumably that is the same, you know, regardless of the age that you are teaching.

That is the same because children and young adults and adolescents, we're all shape - shifting over time, aren't we? We're all kind of changing the way that we perceive and interact with the world based on our cultural context. So the teacher's position in that regard is continuously shape -shifting and adapting to meet the needs of the audience. So that was one thing. And the other thing that just struck me as you were describing, for instance, the kind of transactionality of delivery of information from perhaps a manager to a worker. One of the things that I keep reflecting on, I know Jen, we've talked about this a lot, is there's a massive understatement and under recognition of emotional labour - you know, the emotional labour that goes into building a relationship, building solidarity, building goodwill, building trust, building shared consensus and commitment. And I think for me, and I'm really cautious about this because to some degree I sometimes think, oh my gosh, am I one of those Luddites? But I've worked in technology most of my career and seen hype bubbles come and go. And I just think, to what extent are we underplaying the intangible aspects of how we interoperate as human beings to create good outputs together? To what extent are bluntly the technocrats “transactionalising” the intangible elements of what it means to be human and what it means to co-create together?



Jen Sproul (33:33)

You have to recognise your own personal bias, right? And you have to recognise your own personal experience or personal thing when you come to any of these conversations. Because I sit here from my bias, from my experiences and to the things that have made my career. Okay, I was trying to do the math in my head then - however many decades into my career now. And I recognise that that is different going in, but I would certainly say that relationships are fundamental to my career and what we do and the human part of it. Actually, that's where most of the successes have come or the failures have come as well, to be honest. And actually, when I have made something successful in my career, in my work - yes, it's largely come from a human interaction, whether it's a creative one or a conversation or an outcome or a relationship or putting myself out there and sort of presenting myself as a salesperson, if you like, and say, look, you can trust me, you can buy from me. But I'm trying to go, that is my bias. So if anyone says to me of course I'm always going to protect that, because I absolutely fundamentally believe that - and I think the IoIC, I mean, Dom, you might correct me, but the IoIC, we certainly stand for human-centered communication. We fundamentally believe that that is what is going to create the outcomes. But we also have to stand for the fact that technology plays a huge part of the role of enabling that. And we can't have this or that. It has to be both. And we have to, I think, find the rhythm and the dance of that relationship that really is going to work, but then doesn't devalue or diminish any human experience or human value, a person's value, a person's characteristic, a person's nature, a person's contribution. And it should be done with the mindset to enrich, not to "transactionalise". But I think that understanding how we do that is really, at this point in the AI game, is really difficult. Because I don't think we have those answers, and I don't think we've come at it with those questions first. We've come at it with platform or technology or product first. And product first never gets you anywhere. You're always going to be forever trying to backtrack and go around that rather than sort of, let's go through those ethical questions and considerations and outputs that are going to be right for us. But that doesn't do anything to create any harm to anybody in any way. And it shouldn't ever. And work and business and humans is only ever going to thrive without humans. I mean, Dom, am I talking IoIC rubbish, but maybe I come to you as my IoIC compatriot - my leadership person. What do you think?

Dom (36:20)

No, I agree.

Jen Sproul (36:23)

Phew! That's like, Phew! I'm not talking something wrong here!



Dom (36:27)

No, I think as you were talking that thinking as organisations, I guess, and listening to all of what Naeema has been saying as well. It's about having that conversation about, look, these, this is the technology we've got. These are some worries that we've got, these are some shortcomings that we can see and here's how we plan to deal with them and getting people involved in that and I think that's the only way around it and I loved your reference back to the Luddites because I think from my limited understanding of them they are a much maligned body of people many of them, because they are presented as being mindless thugs largely because I suppose because the people they were opposing wrote the history subsequently but they weren't at all, and they try to have conversations and I think that's underpinning what we're talking about here. So as communicators, I think we have a job to have conversations about AI, its limitations, concerns and issues and how we resolve them.

Naeema (37:13)

I think you're the key people to have the conversation because you're conversationalists, you're communicators. And I'm really enjoying reading a lot more about the Luddites and exploring a history that I didn't know. The propaganda view of it, that they were out smashing looms and hating technology. And now I know they were questioning - and I think that's, you know, 100 % exactly what you've all said - is that I think now when we look at our role, and particularly the role of communicators, it's, I think, the most important skill. So if we go back to skills and the education people, so we do have to start with the information first, to structure a lecture or a workshop or something, we have to have that. And then we move into the kind of the layers underneath it, where it enables people to analyse, question and think. And that's where we are now.

I think, and we're going through this. So when I started, as I say, I was like super excited, artificial intelligence, amazing. And it does a lot of clear things which are fantastic, like identifying cancer scales quickly, things around crop changes, you know, we could be fantastic for climate, even though it does use a lot of energy, but we could balance that. But where I am concerned are these human areas. And therefore, I'm not saying we don't ever have this, but we need to employ a lot more of our questioning, our thinking, our analysing. And it's not just about the technology, but who owns the technology? What are their directions? So when we look at it - this is the other side of it, they are businesses, they're huge businesses and they're organisations. What are their aims and their kind of purpose as well? I think that's just where we need to consider as well, because for other technology, we do ask those questions. Plane technology or car technology, we kind of ask it more like that. But here we get a bit kind of over romanticised maybe about this technology.



Cat Barnard (39:11)

Well, there's such a lot of froth as well, isn't there? There's such a lot of hype and there's, you know, you only have to go on to any of the social media platforms at any point in time and you just, it's like trying to drink from a fire hydrant. The amount of people on there telling you that either they are the panacea solution to all your, you know, confused dilemmas or that if you don't adopt these tools pronto, you're going to get replaced by somebody who's infinitely more capable. So trying to kind of, I feel like we've been knitting clouds a little bit, but I do also feel like the more that we collectively talk about these topics, then we deepen our understanding, we move the needle on the record and so on. But bringing this back round to internal communication as a profession, and a discipline and a function. Naeema, what role do you feel internal communication can play to help organisations better address the ethical issues of AI adoption at work?

Naeema (40:15)

As I say, I think you've probably got the best part of this because by nature, communicating needs to have critical analysis. I'd even just pull out that particular skill and say, look, and I have done in other ways, but I think you have it, is to say, this is the most important quality that we use. And not just for internal communicators, but as internal communicators, we feel that this is how we can impart this - this is how it works. So to be critical of technology as we would with any kind of implementation of new things coming in, just a critical head on, I think it's really important. And that comes through already. And then we could look at it as how we move forward. Then, you know, perhaps looking at raising awareness of some of the issues and challenges and the benefits. So that's again, I think something really important that I feel internal communicators can do.

But the two other things I want to talk about which I think IC can do and all of us - is I think we're now we're now moving or entering into this phase where people are kind of, okay, I guess I'm not fully sure about artificial intelligence, but I get some of it. What are the guidelines or the safety rails or some of the kind of what do I need to know to ensure these things? And that goes back to what I was saying at the beginning, if we know the purpose and direction, how can we make this work effectively and say, this is part of who we are, our heritage as an organisation, or we're about learning or about this, how can we ensure that? So some of the guidelines, I think, I'll call it guidelines around privacy, bias, human oversight, those are the kind of things that we say, but we maybe want more about integrated in things.

That was penultimate and on the last one, and the work I've been doing a lot more is really thinking now we're moving into this new direction. As Dom was saying, you know, a lot of



this technology is great and we can move forward. What does that look like? So some of the kind of perhaps thinking what does, I call it human AI symbiosis, but it's really about human AI collaboration. Let's think of more about these roles, where AI can augment human capabilities, but also where we don't want AI at all.

I would prefer it out of like things like counselling and coaching, but it's there, it's everywhere. It's quite strongly there. But anyway, those are the things I think, well, how can we start looking? And I think the IoIC now can perhaps start turning its mind to thinking, well, what does AI human symbiosis look like as collaboration? Where can we use it well? Where can it add value? And where can we start enabling people to think, no, ask questions here? We're not saying no, but just ask some questions. That's what I'd say.

Jen Sproul (42:55)

Can I just jump in as well Naeema, as you know we are working with you as a follow up to this as well, so just to say to listeners as well is that we don't have a name, we don't have anything like that, but those kinds of AI guide rails or questions or something or whatever we hope to continue to work on and I think it is about - because there's a lot of new, the other thing I would say is when we're thinking about the questions that we ask as internal communicators, particularly to somebody in the IT department or to somebody, in the ESG team or somebody in Ops or a technology company. And I think it places that responsibility on us as procurers of this kind of technology. I think what it challenges us to is because there's so many more things it throws up is to have a new, more varied questions. And I at the IoIC we hope to guide you is what are those questions to ask? Because actually they're things we've never had been faced before. So you wouldn't think to ask because you know, it's not a natural thing about, you know, do you scan faces and what you do with that data - we have to find, I think, a new language to ask the right kind of questions to make sure we enact within those guide rails. And I think as IoIC, hopefully that's something over the coming months and with your expertise, we'll bring in and we'll consult with members on that so that we can have that collective place to come from. Because I think the challenge at the moment is, other than knowing we should ask where is data going - we don't really understand the full language we should be using of those questions to make sure we're investigating properly before we go into a decision. And I think that's the challenge that we're in as a profession as well.

Naeema (44:29)

A challenge that everyone faces and we talked about some examples from, you know, job areas such as HR, teaching and learning and other kind of things - so these are the kind of questions I think we're all in at the moment.



Dom (44:43)

To bring us into land - we talked about lots of fantastic things, which have sparked lots of thoughts. And you gave us those three challenges, I think around critical analysis, around establishing and building guidelines and about human AI collaboration symbiosis. So I know it's a difficult question, but to finish off - what's one thing that you would like internal communicators listening to this to take from our conversation?

Naeema (45:07)

I think - I'm going to pick up what Jen said - I think once we're off with, you know what, let's start having these open conversations about AI. Let's call it ethics because we're talking ethics here, but some of the things around AI ethics. So we think, what does ethical AI look to you? What would you the impact that you have? And I think once we start those conversations, if people feel more comfortable, because there's a lot of people who think with AI - myself included, thinking, oh my gosh, even now I was thinking, oh my gosh, there are real experts out here who know a lot more detail than I think. Well, actually it doesn't matter. I don't know how an internal combustion engine works, but I can still have a view on Boeing at the moment. I feel you are communicators. IoIC is the profession. So developing proactive communications by initiating some of the more open conversations about AI ethics, about the impact and look at some of those complexities and therefore look at how we start building those questions, Jen, around trust, risk, and perhaps we're talking about responsible adoption and things like that. What that might look like for the near future and what might be, as Cat said, the thing we're really working on a lot is the impact of that and therefore perhaps some of the unintended consequences that we may consider around those things. That's what I'd say Dom.

Jen Sproul (46:26)

Naeema, thank you so much. Cat, I'll try to throw back to you to close - but I just want to say thank you. And I think just to say as listeners as well, we are going to do more and hopefully work with you on this because it's a whole new learning curve for us all. And we want to support people through it.

Cat Barnard (46:42)

Absolutely. And you know, the more that we surface the questions that we've got, all of us, because we'll all have different questions based on our own particular world view, our own



particular lived experience. So there is no such thing. I think I've said this a couple of times in recent pieces for the IoIC, there's no such thing as a silly question anymore, actually, to quote, I think, a Harvard academic who wrote a book. I can't remember his name, but the book was called Questions Are the Answer. And I think that's where I would park this. But yes, I'm looking forward to us collaborating and doing more kind of investigative analysis and more kind of surfacing of what are the things that actually matter if we are going to fully leverage these digital efficiencies then surely the byproduct of that must be more humanised workplaces. So let's keep that at the centre of our line of inquiry.

Thank you so much for coming and sharing your viewpoints with us today. I'm sure we will have you back on to the podcast before too long, because the pace at which things are unfolding , there will be plenty more opportunity to dissect and contemplate.

Naeema (48:01)

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thanks.