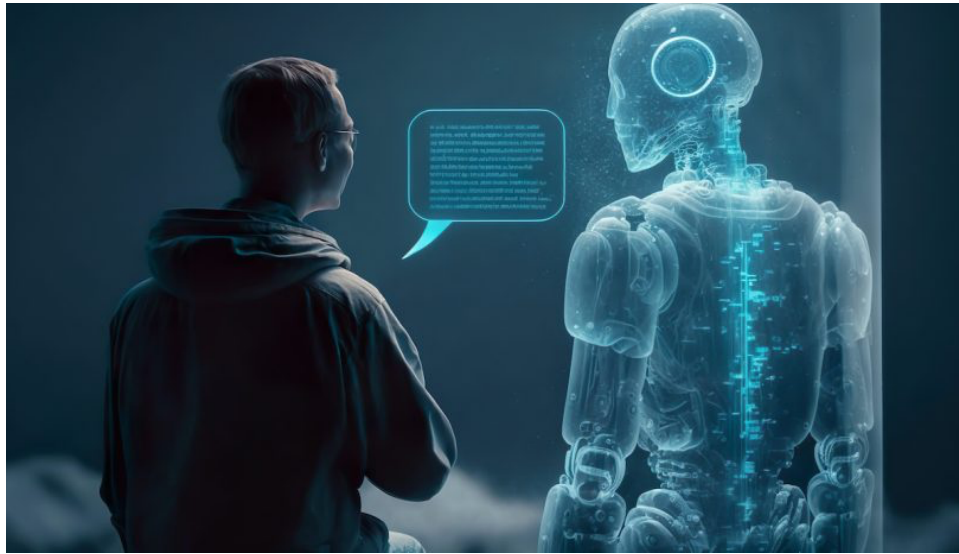


## How PR professionals can leverage AI without losing the human touch



*PR professionals can work together with advancing AI technology to increase creativity in PR. Credit: Google*

After more than 40 years in the communications industry, Robert Walz has watched countless tools come and go, but none have stirred up the same mix of excitement and concern as artificial intelligence.

“What used to take me two hours to write, I can now do in a minute—and it’s better than I could have written,” said Walz, now a public relations professor at BYU. “It’s 100% grammatically correct, the spelling is right, and it’s in AP style.”

Like many PR professionals, Walz has embraced AI for its speed and precision. But he’s also quick to point out its limits and the ethical risks of relying too heavily on it. As AI becomes more advanced, public relations practitioners must strike a balance between efficiency and authenticity, between automation and human oversight.

The shift is happening fast. According to The Michigan Journal of Economics, automation has already eliminated 1.7 million jobs. CNN reports nearly one in three companies plan to automate even more tasks in the coming year. In a relationship-driven field like PR, professionals must now find ways to stay relevant in an industry where technology never sleeps.

Fortunately, PR isn’t an “either-or” scenario—AI and human creativity don’t have to be separate. By learning how to utilize AI strategically, PR professionals can enhance efficiency, improve insights, and personalize messaging—all while maintaining the authenticity and relationship-building that make PR so impactful.

**Yes, professionals still have to be careful when using AI**

AI may be fast—but it isn't flawless. From factual errors to “hallucinated” responses that sound convincing but are entirely made up, artificial intelligence can present serious risks to credibility if left unchecked. For PR professionals whose work centers on trust and reputation, ethical responsibility must stay front and center.

“It's important for us to have an ethical understanding so that when things come up, we can apply those same ethical standards to our decision-making using artificial intelligence,” Walz said.

Those ethical concerns extend to quality and nuance, too. Ken Plowman, another seasoned PR expert and BYU professor, believes AI tools often fall short of the precision that professionals need.

“It uses too many words, you know, and beats around the bush somewhat,” he said.

For both experts, the message is clear: AI can support public relations work—but it can't replace human judgment, strategy, or creativity.

## **From time-saver to competitive edge**

Although AI isn't perfect, it has already proven to be highly effective, especially in public relations. Walz said AI helps professionals complete tasks like press releases, news stories, and other written content more efficiently.

“Now, you can take a huge data set and do an assessment and find patterns and codes within that data set in minutes instead of weeks,” Walz said. “And so because of that, you're going to see a huge increase in the amount of content that is submitted for publication.”

Beyond writing, AI can assist with a wide range of PR tasks like managing social media posts, responding to customer messages, analyzing sentiment, building media lists, and even taking notes during meetings. Tools like chatbots, speech-to-text platforms, and automated media outreach systems are helping professionals save time and improve accuracy.

Used strategically, AI increases organizational efficiency, boosts engagement, and supports both crisis and reputation management efforts, turning it into a competitive advantage.

“You will not be replaced in mass communication as a writer by AI,” Walz said. “You'll be replaced by someone who knows how to use AI better than you do.”

## **Different ways to use AI in PR**

With AI continuing to evolve, PR professionals who learn to use it effectively will gain a competitive edge. Here are three ways professionals can include it in their workflow:

- Research

AI can help professionals explore unfamiliar topics, synthesize large amounts of data, and uncover insights faster than traditional methods. Once data is collected, tools like Google's NotebookLM and Otter.ai can process transcripts from focus groups or interviews, organize ideas, and highlight key themes to inform campaign strategies.

"For the PR industry, it really is a time saver on the front end," Plowman said. "Things like researching stories or academic journal articles—it makes that process much more efficient."

- Media Monitoring

There is a lot of data on the internet, and dissecting that data can take a long time, which can hinder the progress of a campaign. Professionals need real-time insights to stay ahead of the trends. AI algorithms can sift through that data in seconds and provide accurate, real-time analytics. AI-powered platforms like Meltwater can analyze media coverage in seconds, providing sentiment analysis, audience insights, and key takeaways. PR teams can use this data to quickly identify relevant conversations and adjust their strategies accordingly.

- Content Creation

Instead of spending hours creating a persona or thinking about what content would reach the organization's key publics the best, PR professionals can use generative AI to refine their work in seconds. Whether it helps in creating ideas or drafting up press releases, generative AI can aid professionals in getting their work done faster. This allows professionals to focus on strategy and storytelling rather than repetitive tasks.

By integrating these strategies of AI into their workflow, PR professionals can enhance efficiency without compromising the human touch that makes communication meaningful. AI isn't here to replace PR professionals—it exists to empower them. As AI technologies continue to evolve, the future of PR belongs to those who can effectively use AI while maintaining the creativity and personal relationships that make communication effective.

In the end, AI can draft the message, but it takes a human to make the message matter.