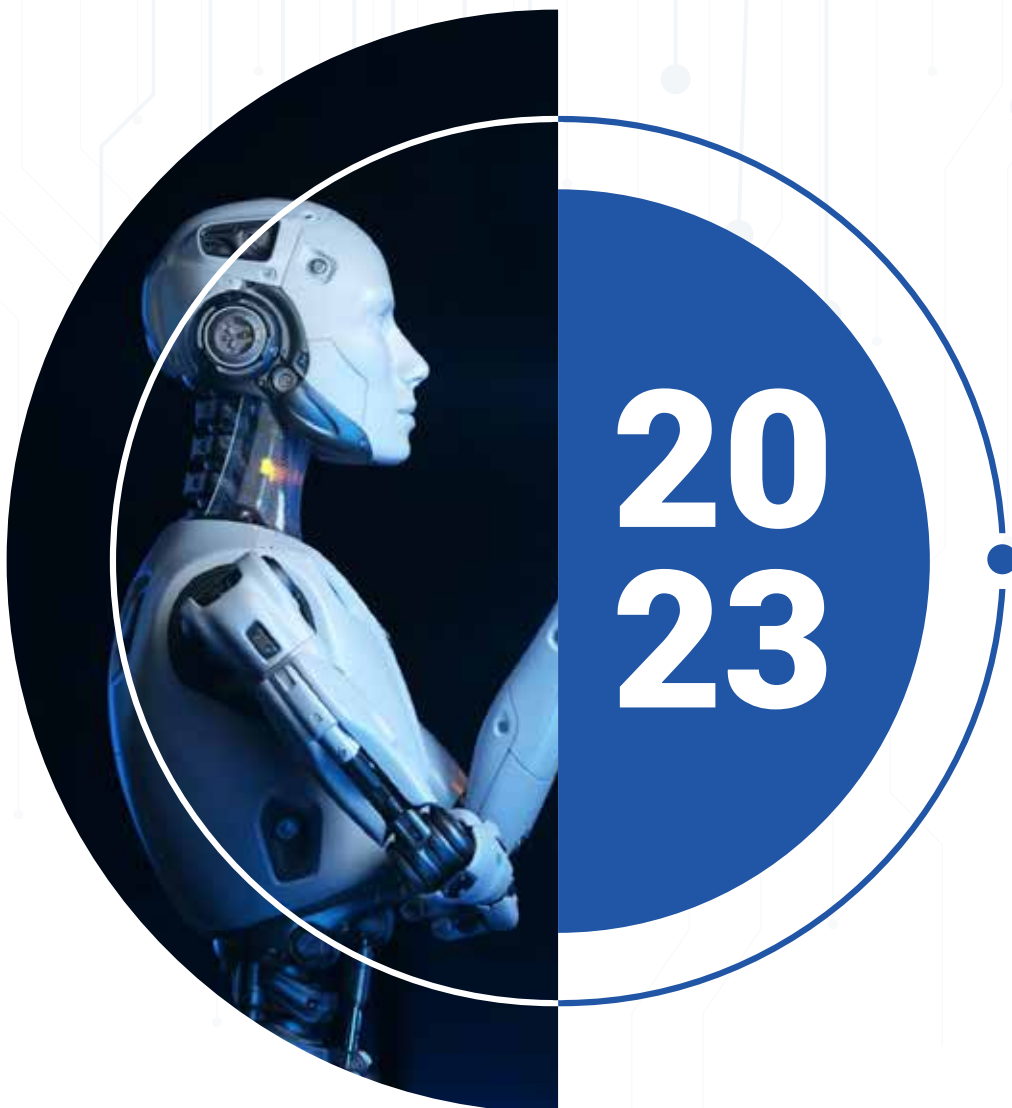




ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND
EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION:

SURVEY DATA REPORT



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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a theoretical concept or future promise; it's a reality for today's employee communicator, and love it or hate it, AI brings a host of choices to consider and decisions to make. A joint survey conducted by North Star Communications Consulting and the University of Missouri School of Journalism on employee communicators and their perceptions and attitudes toward AI reveals a mix of utility and fear. From feelings about AI, to its perceived potential, current use, its value and barriers to adopting it, this research is a first-of-its-kind to assess an industry's position on adapting to the latest seismic shift in technology for communicators. Key findings include:

- While many respondents feel confident about their knowledge of AI, they also express skepticism and concern about its accuracy and security. Respondents acknowledge the potential benefits of AI in saving time on mundane tasks and improving efficiency -- allowing them to focus more on strategic work.
- A significant portion of respondents report seeing AI applications in business processes and employee communications, and a majority believe that using AI for work assignments is ethical. Content generation emerged as a primary area where AI could be useful, along with assisting in ideation and drafting materials like executive summaries and discussion guides.
- Despite recognizing the potential value of AI, employee communicators appear hesitant to fully embrace the technology. Many of them disagree with the idea that AI is the future of employee communications and express concerns about job elimination stemming from AI adoption. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion believe that AI can deliver value for employee communications within the first year of implementation.
- Primary barriers to AI adoption include concerns about accuracy and security, along with the affordability of the technology. Additionally, explaining the value of AI to leadership and learning how to use AI are perceived as potential challenges.
- When asked about their feelings toward using AI for employee communications, interest, anxiety and excitement were the most common responses. While interest indicates curiosity and potential openness to AI adoption, anxiety reflects concerns and uncertainties about its impact.
- In terms of current AI usage, the majority of respondents report they expect to be using AI for employee communications within the next year. ChatGPT has emerged as the dominant AI tool used by employee communicators.

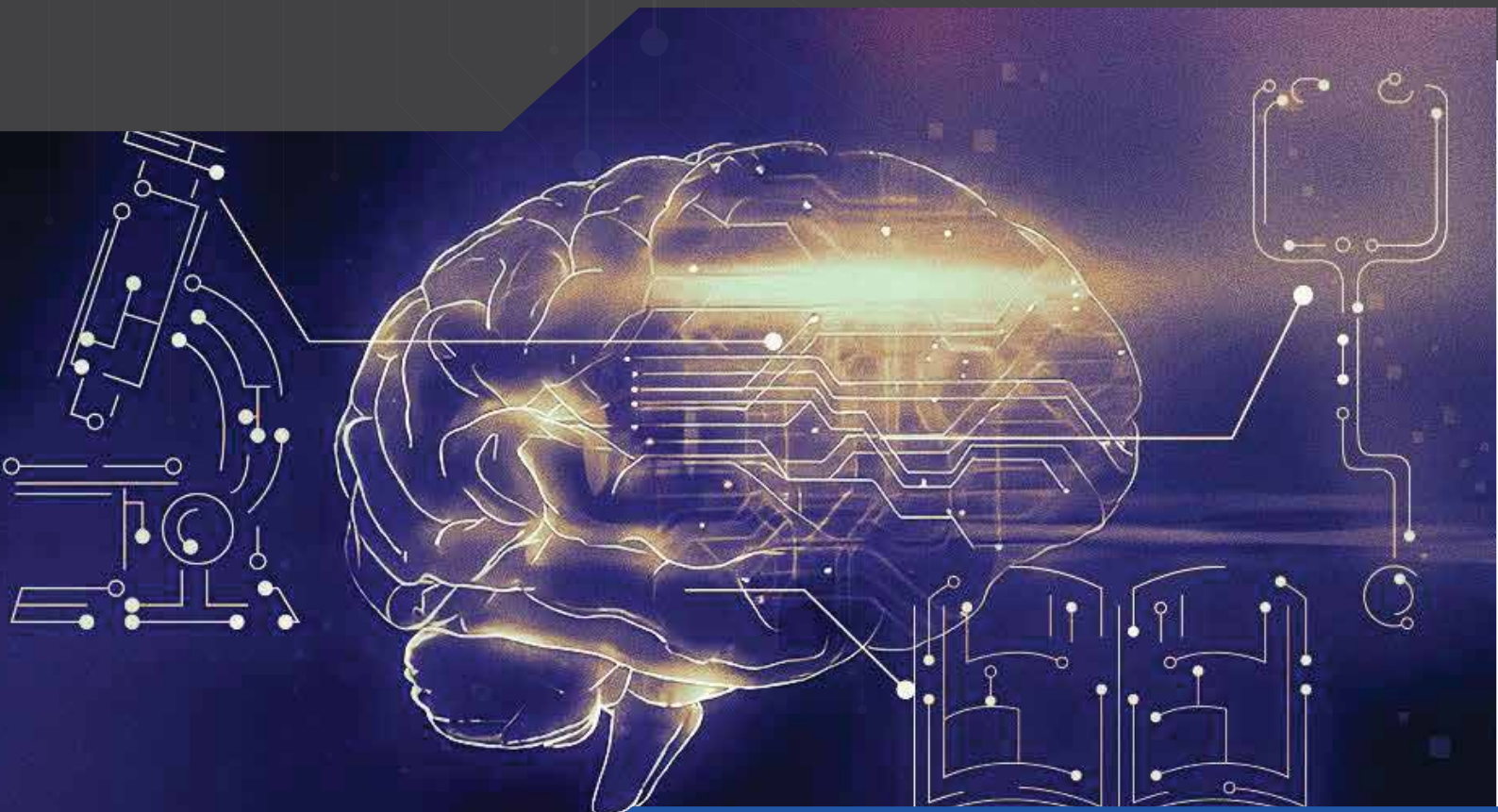
Overall, the survey highlighted a paradoxical situation where employee communicators recognized the benefits of AI but are hesitant to fully adopt it due to concerns about accuracy, security and job impact. Despite this hesitation, there is a belief that AI can deliver value relatively quickly, primarily in terms of saved time and content generation. As AI technology continues to evolve and address these concerns, it is likely that more employee communicators will more thoroughly embrace its use in their work processes.

Methodology and Analysis

In order to learn more about the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and usage of artificial intelligence by employee communicators, we created a **20**-question survey using Qualtrics. The survey questions took various forms, from 5-point Likert scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree), open-ended and multiple choice. The first six questions were related to demographics, to learn the makeup of the respondents.

The survey was then sent out using a snowball sample via the researchers' networks on LinkedIn, as well as through personal invitations to communications professionals and teams in corporate, educational, government and agency organizations.

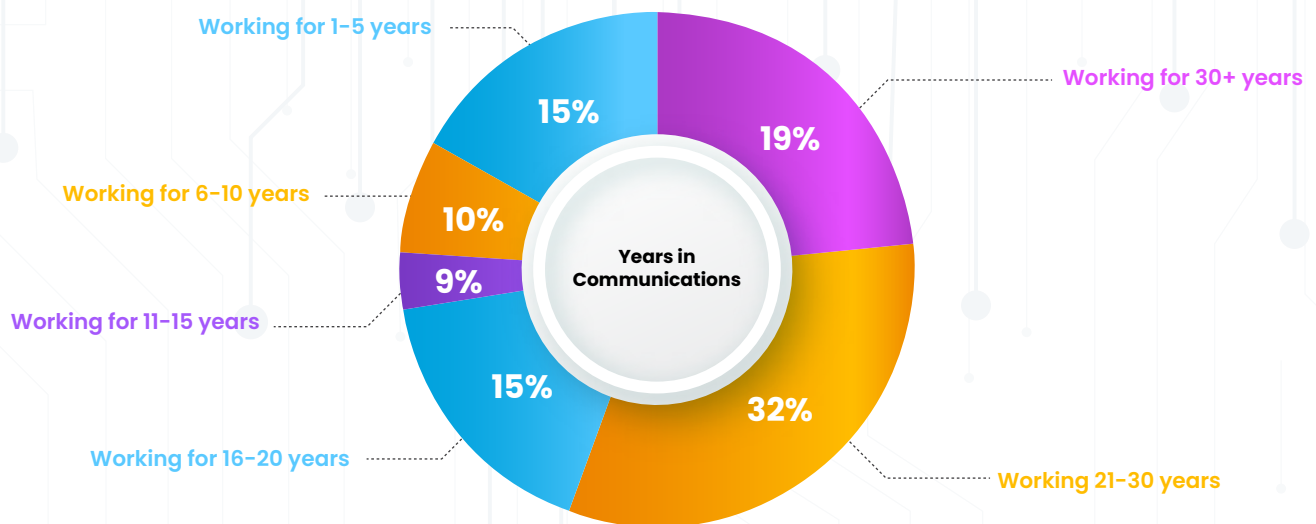
The survey was open for six weeks, launching on Wednesday, **May 17** and closing on Wednesday, **July 26**. A total of **125** individuals clicked into the survey, **24** of whom didn't answer any questions. Of the remaining 101, only 66 completed the survey to the end. For the majority of the questions, there were **75** or more respondents. The total respondents will be indicated in the data analysis below for each question. Due to the total number of respondents, data will only be shown for each question in the aggregate as providing responses based on gender, age, ethnicity or other demographic characteristics would not be statistically significant.



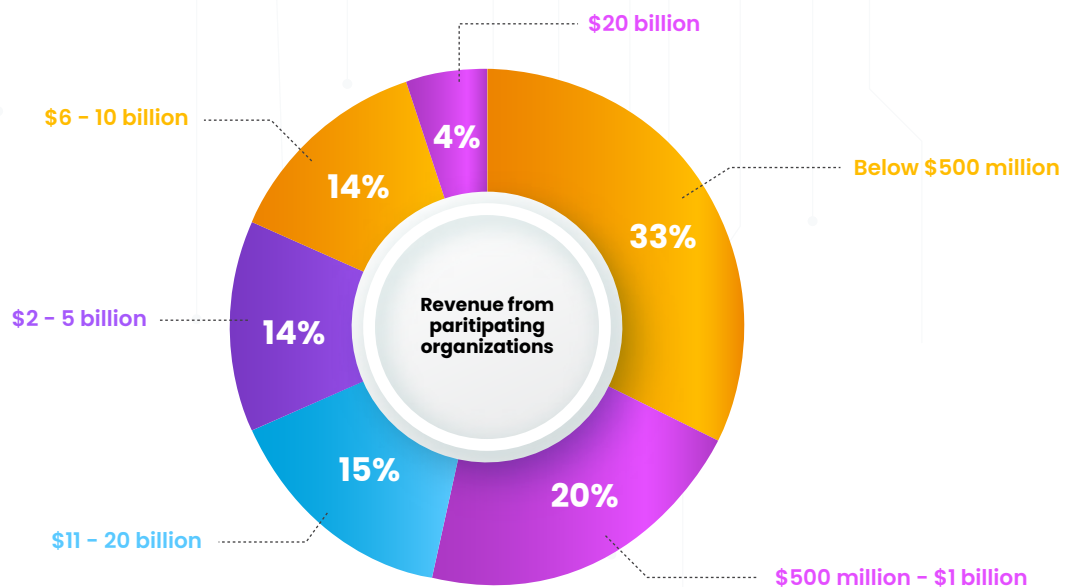
Survey Data Report

Demographics: The pool of respondents was primarily older (29% 45-54, 23% 55-64), white (77%) and female (65%).

The range of experience as a professional communicator varied greatly, although the majority had been working for 21-30+ years (21-30 years 32%, 30+ years 19%).



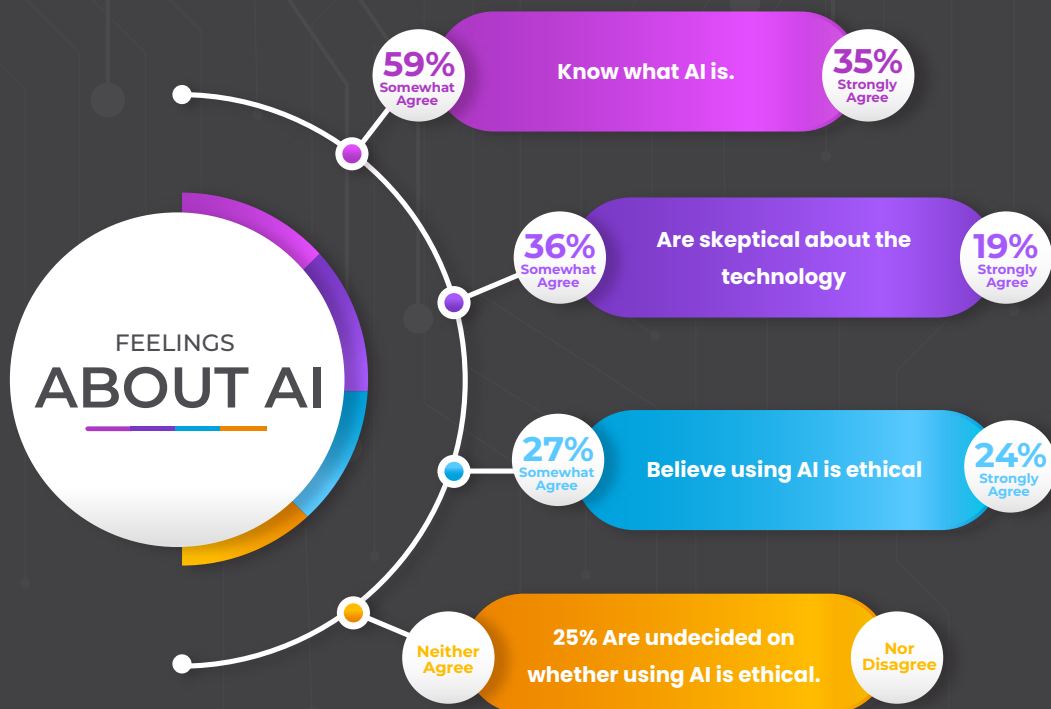
The size of the organizations in revenue our respondents worked for tended to be under \$1 billion (33% under \$500 million, 20% \$500 million – \$1 billion).



Feelings About AI

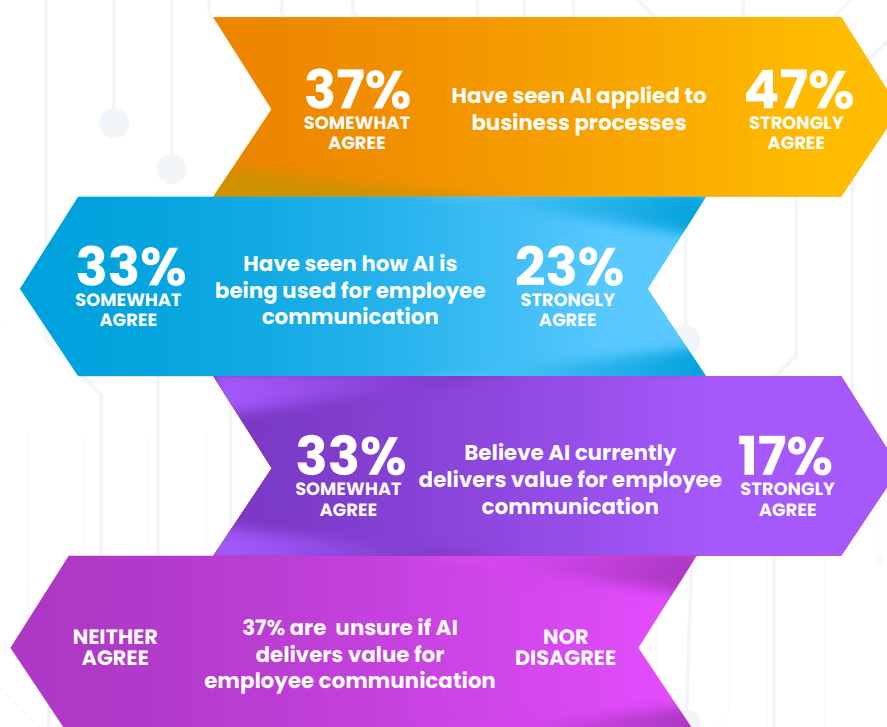
When asked the top three words that came to mind when thinking about AI, “scary” was the top word, followed by “efficiency” and “helpful.” This reflects the dichotomy of thought about the topic where professional communicators see the potential in this technology, but also are quite wary of how it will affect their jobs and livelihoods.

Related to this, our **75** respondents were asked a series of Likert scale questions (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to learn more about their knowledge and feelings about AI. This yielded similar themes to the open-ended question as respondents felt confident that they knew what AI was (**59%** somewhat agree, **35%** strongly agree), but were skeptical about the technology (**36%** somewhat agree, **19%** strongly agree). There is a strong belief that using AI to complete work assignments is ethical with **51%** agreeing (**27%** somewhat, **24%** strongly) and another **25%** neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

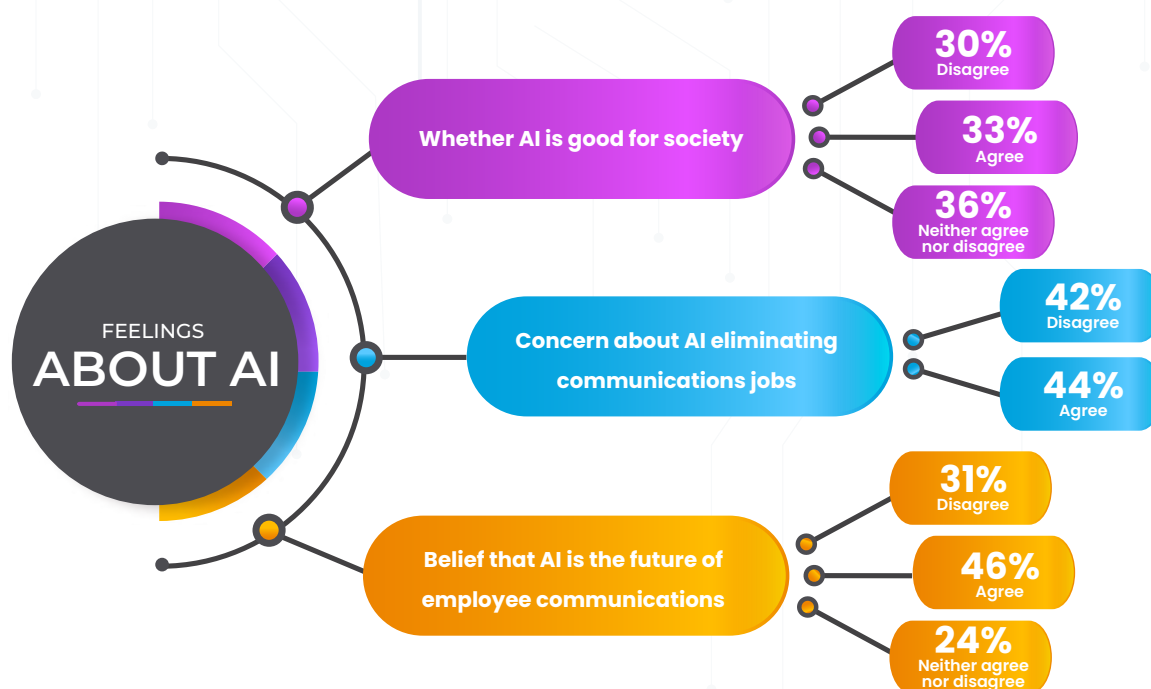


These feelings appear to be coming from a place of knowledge, as the majority of respondents had seen examples of how AI has been applied to business processes (**37%** somewhat agree, **47%** strongly agree) and how AI is being used for employee communications (**33%** somewhat agree, **23%** strongly agree). The majority also believed that AI currently delivers value for employee communication efforts with **50%** agreeing (**33%** somewhat, **17%** strongly), although **37%** neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement.

Seeing the value of AI



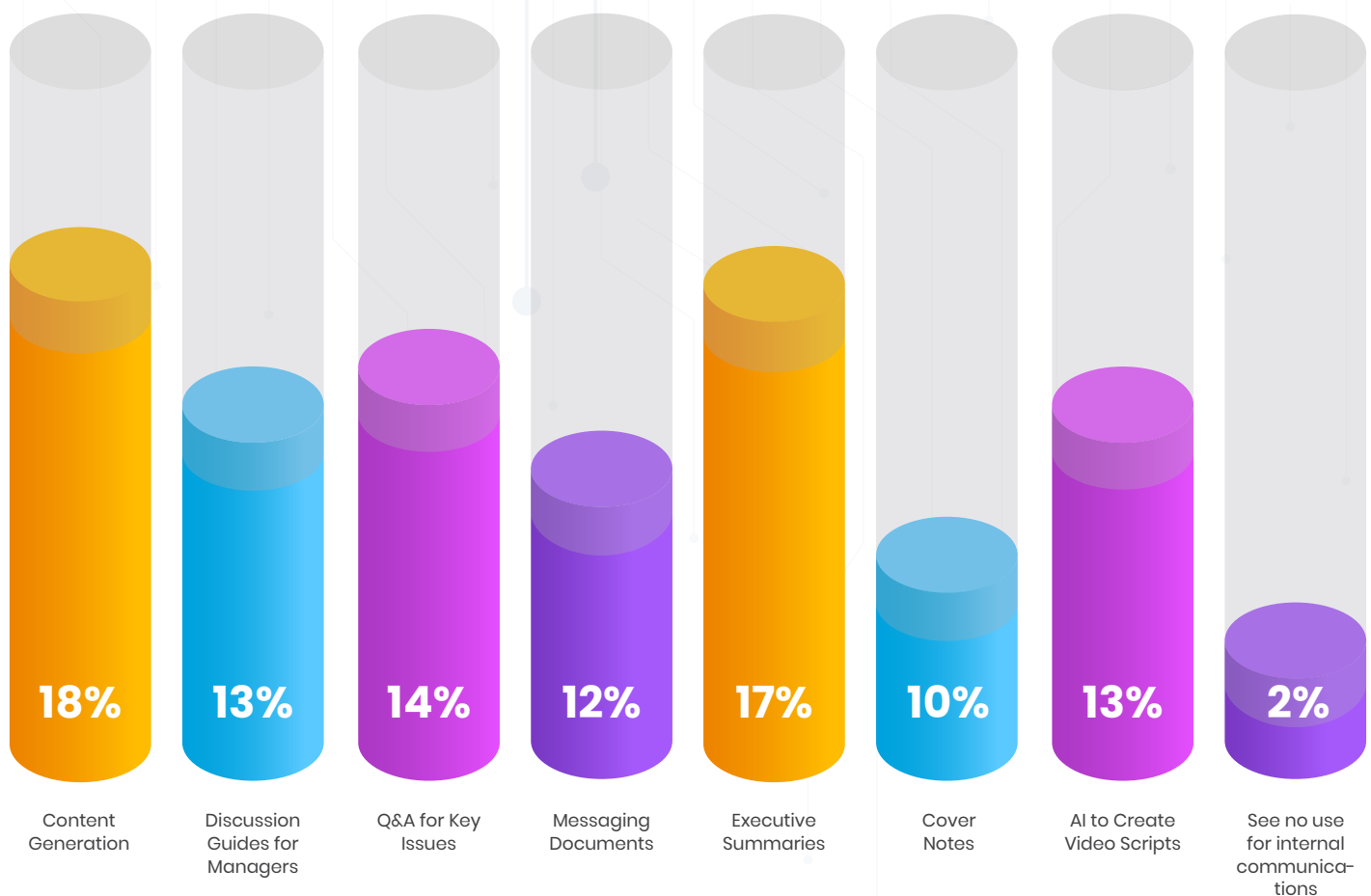
With this knowledge, employee communicators appear to be shying away from actual use of the technology, as **44%** strongly disagree that they are currently using AI for employee communication. They are also split on whether AI is good for society (**30%** disagree, **33%** agree, **36%** neither agree nor disagree), registered concern about AI eliminating communications jobs (**42%** disagree, **44%** agree), and belief that AI is the future of employee communications (**31%** disagree, **46%** agree, **24%** neither agree nor disagree).



Potential of AI for Employee Communications

When asked about how AI could potentially be useful for employee communication for the individual or their company/organization, responses showed AI being used primarily for content generation (internal communication channels **18%**, discussion guides for managers **13%**, Q&A for key issues **14%**, messaging documents **12%**), along with more mundane tasks (executive summaries **17%**, cover notes **10%**). Somewhat surprisingly, **13%** were using AI to create video scripts and less than **2%** said “I don’t see AI being potentially useful to employee communicators.” Among those who selected “Other” the trend was that they were using AI to create first drafts of much of their work and were then refining by hand from there. This falls within the idea of using AI for ideation that came up quite often in the survey responses.

Where communicators see AI creating value



Value of AI for Employee Communicators

When asked how long after starting to use it do you believe it takes for AI to deliver value for employee communications, respondents were bullish. The majority (**55%**) said value would come within the first year and another **31%** said it would happen within the first two years.

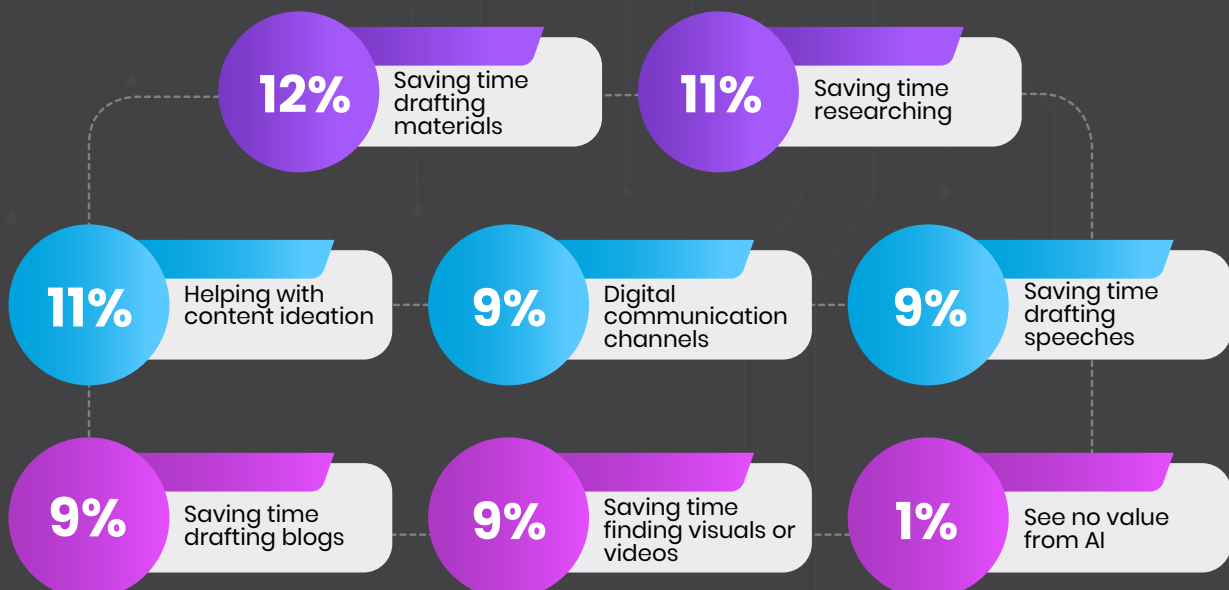
When AI will deliver value



Participants were then provided with a list of **14** possible ways AI could provide value for employee communications, along with an option that "I don't believe AI can deliver value for employee communications." They could select all that applied to them. The top three responses were saving time drafting materials (**12%**), saving time researching (**11%**) and helping with content ideation (**11%**). Others among the top picks were saving time drafting news items for digital communication channels (**9%**), saving time drafting speeches (**9%**), saving time drafting blogs (**9%**) and saving time finding visuals or videos to support content in digital channels (**9%**). It's notable that less than **1%** (only **4** of the **75** respondents) said they didn't believe AI could deliver value for employee communications.

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question, having them complete this sentence "AI can deliver value for me in my work by..." The key idea that arose from this was the time that could be saved by using AI. This concept came up in nearly every response, whether it was related to creating content, idea generation or automating simple or mundane tasks.

How AI will deliver value



Current AI Use Among Employee Communicators

It was important to get a sense for what employee communicators were actually doing with AI. Respondents were asked when they expected to be using AI for employee communications and most said within the next year (**38%** in the next six months, **25%** 6-12 months). Another **18%** said within the next 1-2 years. However, it's notable that **17%** said they didn't expect to be using AI in the foreseeable future.

Digging into the hesitancy of AI usage, respondents were asked to select from four options to complete the statement "In order for me or my organization to use AI for employee communications, I need..." They could select all that applied, along with an "Other" option as well as a choice if they were already using AI for their work.

Among the four options, respondents were quite split:

- Demonstration on AI for content generation in my business environment (**23%**)
- Proof in the form of case studies that show its practical use (**17%**)
- Proof in the form of data that there is a measurable productivity benefit (**17%**)
- A business case that clearly shows return on investment (**16%**)

Another **12%** said they were already using AI and **14%** selected the "Other" option. For this latter group, the primary themes that emerged were related to concerns about accuracy, ethics and security, wanting proof of quality results, and needing guidance from their organizations/employers on using AI.

To learn more about what tools/platforms they were using by name, respondents were provided a list of eight options, along with an "Other" option and "none of these." Based on those possibilities, it was clear that ChatGPT was dominant in the field with a little over **50%** using one of those two tools (ChatGPT 3.5 or ChatGPT 4.0). No other option was being used by more than **6%** of participants. A total of 11% did select "Other" and among those, about half mentioned Bard, with DALL-E and MidJourney also receiving a handful of mentions.

Respondents were also asked what tasks they were using AI for and given a list of 11 options where they could select all that applied, including “Other” and “I currently am not using AI for employee communications.” From this list, two uses stood out – ideation purposes (**17%**) and drafting news items (**14%**) for digital communication channels. Others that were notable were drafting blogs (**10%**), drafting speeches (**8%**) and saving time finding visuals or videos to support content in digital channels (**8%**). It was notable that the most selected option (**24%**) was that they currently weren’t using AI for employee communication.

Finally, we asked them to select from a list of **25** feelings based on this statement “When I think about using AI for employee communication, I feel...” Respondents could choose up to three words. From this list, the top response that **24%** selected was “Interest” followed by “Anxiety” at **14%** and “Excitement” at **13%**. Others of note were “Fear” at **8%**, “Appreciation” and “Confusion” each at **7%**, and “Satisfaction” at **6%**.



Barriers to AI Adoption for Employee Communicators

Related to the barriers to using AI, participants were asked to complete a series of questions related to the statement “When thinking about using AI for employee communications, I struggle with...” The primary struggles for employee communicators were related to concerns about accuracy (**45%** somewhat agree, **42%** strongly agree) and security (**41%** somewhat agree, **46%** strongly agree). Affording the technology (**30%** somewhat agree, **10%** strongly agree) was also an issue. While believing in the value AI could deliver wasn’t a struggle for employee communicators (**33%** somewhat disagree, **20%** strongly disagree), explaining that value to leadership was a potential problem (**41%** somewhat agree, **9%** strongly agree, **17%** neither agree nor disagree). Another barrier for employee communicators was learning how to use AI with **59%** agreeing that it was a struggle (**32%** somewhat agree, **17%** strongly agree).

When asked about their primary concern with using AI, accuracy and security were the top two themes. This echoed the data from the rest of the survey.



Conclusion and Action Steps to Consider

Apprehensions about adopting AI technologies for employee communications – accuracy and security, in particular – can easily be connected to the “newness” of the technology as well as current AI “learning” techniques. Feelings among communicators of anxiety and fear – balanced with sentiments like excitement, interest and appreciation – further demonstrate the fluid and even polarized environment that pioneering, breakthrough technologies bring with them.

A healthy skepticism with a dose pragmatic reality might be the best way of describing where employee communicators are in terms of their journeys. We don’t completely trust the technology, but recognize its initial value in delivering productivity, and the inevitable nature of its influence and staying power.

While even some of the technology industry’s leaders have expressed a need to proceed with caution when it comes to driving the use of AI, the reality is that millions upon millions of everyday users already are experimenting with it.

Each organization, in this crucial time of transition, must assess AI in the context of its own operations. Employee communicators – or any communicator, for that matter – has an initial choice to make: wait to be dragged behind this wave of technology, or influence the shape it takes. Any communicator who chooses the latter can consider these as next steps:

1. Engage the organization’s Chief Communications and/or Corporate Affairs Officer
2. Partner with key functions such as HR, Legal, IT, Strategy and Supply Chain to assess any current AI policies, or create policies that fit:
 - a. The organization’s values
 - b. The organization’s culture
3. Assess use cases against the organization’s Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies and practices
4. If – as in larger organizations – there are other communicators in operating divisions or other parts of a de-centralized entity – engage those communicators in your efforts.
5. Commit to revisiting and revising any AI policies regularly – given the fluid nature of technology and its evolution.
6. Test existing AI platforms for yourself (see free white paper available for download below); until communicators begin experimenting with the technology, it will be difficult to make decisions on professional and organization uses for it.

As with the introduction and evolution of the internet and social media, AI represents the next “wild west” of digital catalysts. To learn more about the landscape of AI for communicators, click here to download a free white paper on the topic from North Star Communications Consulting.

<https://www.northstarcomms.com/artificial-intelligence-the-communicator-white-paper/>

Appendix A:

Survey Questions

Q2 What is your current age?

- ☐ 18 – 24
- ☐ 25 – 34
- ☐ 35 – 44
- ☐ 45 – 54
- ☐ 55 – 64
- ☐ 65 or older
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q3 What gender do you identify with?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q4 What race/ethnicity do you identify with?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Middle Eastern/Arabic
- ☐ Multiracial/multiethnic
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q5 How many years have you been a professional communicator?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 30+ years

Q6 What is the size of your company (in revenue)?

- o Below \$500 million
- o \$500 million - \$1 billion
- o \$2 - 5 billion
- o \$6 - 10 billion
- o \$11 - 20 billion
- o \$20+ billion

Q7 What are the three words that first come to mind when you think about AI?



Q8 Please select your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements.	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I know what artificial intelligence (AI) is.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have seen examples of how AI has been applied to business processes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have seen examples of how AI is being used for employee communications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AI currently delivers value for employee communication efforts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am currently using AI for employee communications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am skeptical of AI.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AI is good for society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AI is the future of employee communications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am concerned that AI will eliminate communications jobs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is ethical to use AI to complete work assignments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 How long after starting to use it do you believe it takes for AI to deliver value for employee communications?

- ☐ Within the first year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 5+ years

Q10 In which of the following ways can using AI for employee communication purposes deliver value? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Saving time drafting materials
- ☐ Saving time creating podcasts
- ☐ Saving time researching
- ☐ Saving time creating videos
- ☐ Saving time drafting blogs
- ☐ Saving time drafting news items for digital communication channels
- ☐ Saving time drafting speeches
- ☐ Saving time finding visuals or videos to support my content in digital channels
- ☐ Reducing need for future additional employees to create content.
- ☐ Delivering analytics/insights for me that I don't currently receive.
- ☐ Helping with content ideation
- ☐ Assisting with the interview process for new employees
- ☐ Creating smart contracts
- ☐ Handling IoT (internet of things) security and data storage
- ☐ I don't believe AI can deliver value for employee communications.

Q11 Which of the following AI platforms are you currently using? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ ChatGPT-3.5
- ☐ ChatGPT-4
- ☐ Five9
- ☐ GitHub
- ☐ JasperAI
- ☐ SoundbiteAI
- ☐ Opera
- ☐ AI Article Writer
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☐ None of these

Q12 Please answer the following questions.

NO

YES

My employer is using AI for HR processes, transactions or compensation and benefits communications.

☐☐

My employer is using AI for other business processes, but not communications at this time.

☐☐

Q13 I expect to begin using AI for employee communications in the next...

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6-12 months
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 2+ years
- ☐ No time in the foreseeable future

Q14 Please select from the following options to complete this statement:

"In order for me or my organization to use AI for employee communications, I need..." (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Proof in the form of case studies that show its practical use
- ☐ Proof in the form of data that there is a measurable productivity benefit
- ☐ A business case that clearly shows return on investment
- ☐ Demonstration on AI for content generation in my business environment
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
- ☒ I am already using AI for employee communications

Q15 Please select from the following options to complete this statement:

"I can see AI potentially being useful for employee communication for me/my company/organization in the following ways..." (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Generating content for internal communications channels (digital and non digital)
- ☐ Creating discussion guides for managers
- ☐ Creating Q&A for key issues or business priorities
- ☐ Creating key messaging documents
- ☐ Creating cover notes
- ☐ Creating executive summaries
- ☐ Creating video scripts
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- ☒ I don't see AI being potentially useful for employee communications

Q16 In just a few words, please complete the following sentence that fits with your work situation.

"AI can deliver value for me in my work by..."

Q17 How are you using AI for employee communications currently? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Creating podcasts
- ☐ Creating videos
- ☐ Drafting blogs
- ☐ Drafting news items for digital communication channels
- ☐ Drafting speeches
- ☐ Saving time finding visuals or videos to support my content in digital channels
- ☐ Delivering analytics/insights
- ☐ Ideation purposes
- ☐ Interviewing new employees
- ☐ Smart contracts
- ☐ IoT (internet of things) security and data storage
- ☐ Other (fill in box) _____
- ☐ I currently am not using AI for employee communications



Q18 Please select your level of agreement/disagreement to the following statement:

"When thinking about using AI for employee communications, I struggle with..."

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Understanding how it can be used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Believing in the value it can deliver.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selling the value it can deliver to leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Affording/budgeting to pay for it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerns about its accuracy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerns about security.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning how to use it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerns about whether it can deliver a product or service that helps me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q19 When I think about using AI for employee communications, I feel... (Select up to three)

- ☐ Admiration
- ☐ Adoration
- ☐ Appreciation
- ☐ Amusement
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Awe
- ☐ Awkwardness
- ☐ Boredom
- ☐ Calmness
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Craving
- ☐ Disgust
- ☐ Empathic pain
- ☐ Entrancement
- ☐ Excitement
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Horror
- ☐ Interest
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Nostalgia
- ☐ Relief
- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Satisfaction
- ☐ Surprise

Q20 Please select your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I know what a DAO (decentralized autonomous organization) is.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know what blockchain is.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NFTs are worthless for employee communications.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understand what digital tokens are.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My company is using blockchain technology.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am using blockchain for employee communications work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I support using cryptocurrency to pay full-time employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I support using cryptocurrency to pay freelance employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use smart contracts with freelance employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q21 Please use one word or phrase to complete the following sentence: "My primary concern with using AI for employee communications is..."



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