

LEVERAGING THE POTENTIAL OF AI-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM GOODYEAR, SAP & CLARIANT

CONTRIBUTORS: LAURA DUDA, MONIKA SCHALLER, KAI ROLKER

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The rise of AI-driven tools is reshaping corporate communication, offering new opportunities to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and strategic impact. What does this mean for global companies? And how can communication leaders provide direction? Three seasoned Chief Communication Officers – Laura Duda, Monika Schaller, and Kai Rolker – share their insights on the evolving role of AI at Goodyear, SAP, and Clariant. They discuss their strategic approaches, the progress they’ve made, and the most promising use cases. They also address key challenges: from overcoming resistance and developing the necessary competencies to managing changes in professional roles.

GOODYEAR is one of the world's largest tire companies. It employs about 68,000 people and manufactures its products at 53 facilities in 20 countries around the world. Its two Innovation Centers in Akron, Ohio, United States, and Colmar-Berg, Luxembourg, strive to develop state-of-the-art products and services that set the technology and performance standard for the industry.

SAP is a global leader in enterprise applications and business artificial intelligence. With more than 109,000 employees worldwide, organizations have trusted SAP

for over 50 years to optimize business-critical operations across finance, procurement, HR, supply chain, and customer experience.

CLARIANT is a Swiss multinational specialty chemical company. It's a leader in the specialty chemicals sector and structured into three business units: care chemicals, adsorbents and additives, and catalysts. More than 10,000 people provide innovative solutions to key trends such as health- and sustainability-conscious consumers, energy transition, and circularity.

ROADMAPS TO AI-DRIVEN COMMUNICATION

What strategic approaches were chosen to implement AI in your communication department?

DUDA: About two years ago, following the launch of ChatGPT, Goodyear's Global Communications team formed an AI task force to research, align, and develop company perspectives and guidelines for communicators. We leverage the task force for two purposes: to share knowledge with our teams around the world, and to learn from one another and identify opportunities for additional collaboration.

The task force has strong representation across our geographies and areas of specialization, and we also included "advisors" from other areas of the company, like legal and IT, to make sure our approach reflects the broader AI perspectives, practices, and expectations that were simultaneously being established by those other functions. They've evaluated about 20 AI tools with the potential to support our work. Once our assessment was complete, we prioritized the use cases based on potential to automate tasks that may be considered more mundane in nature.

A lot of detailed research went into not only potential tools but also into critical trends, best practices, and benchmarking. Other considerations we looked at were the opportunities and risks with external agency partners and vendors who use AI. The task force used its findings to develop guidelines, recommend tools, and share how-tos for incorporating AI effectively into our day-to-day work.

SCHALLER: At SAP, our strategy for AI-driven communication is twofold. For media monitoring, we've already been using an AI-based tool for sentiment analysis and strategic media monitoring since 2022. This enables us to gain real-time insights into public perception, track key media narratives, and proactively adjust our communication strategies.

For generative content creation and research, we're currently implementing our own AI creation tool developed by software developers at SAP. This tool is being trained on Global Communication data such as key messaging documents, strategy papers, press releases, etc. and is based on our inhouse SAP GenAI Hub, which offers a variety of language models to use. This hub was introduced in early 2023.

THE PHASED APPROACH TO AI AT SAP

- **Initial requirements workshop & communications -wide survey:** Identifying specific pain points and areas where AI could provide the most value. Communication colleagues showed the need for a tailored communications AI bot.
- **Introduction of a suite of AI-powered assistants:** Starting with a "generic bot", which will be able to answer research questions such as "What is our key messaging on XYZ business topic?" or "What were our earnings results from XYZ quarter?"
- **Pilot phase:** Redefining the AI models based on real-world usage. Ensuring the tool remains adaptable and aligned with our communicators' needs is a key focus.
- **Final phase:** Scaling AI adoption, adding more specialized assistants, and integrating them seamlessly into the workflows. Fostering a cultural change to ensure consistent and accurate information dissemination.

ROLKER: At Clariant and in the communication department, our approach to AI has been both strategic and pragmatic. Due to our existing digital infrastructure and the fact that most of our data is stored in the cloud, we had a solid data foundation to work with.

Our goal in communications was to enable AI to enhance productivity, automate repetitive tasks, and support content creation while maintaining high-quality communication standards. At the same time, we supported the introduction of Clarita, our AI-powered assistant, across the company. By giving the tool a relatable identity, we encouraged employees to engage with AI early on, lowering adoption barriers. At the same time, we launched several AI-driven communication projects, initially focusing on three key areas: content creation, image generation, and marketing automation. These projects quickly gained traction, and we scaled them up significantly.

A critical element of our strategy has been cross-functional collaboration. AI is not just a tool for communication – it impacts multiple business functions. Therefore, we closely align with IT, strategy, and business units to ensure AI adoption creates real business value.

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL

Can you share examples of early successes or promising use cases that you've observed?

ROLKER: We started with the goal to initiate two AI projects in 2024, but the enthusiasm within the team led us to launch around 20. The demand for AI-driven solutions within our department and across the company has been remarkable. We've seen immediate benefits in productivity, efficiency, and content quality.

AI now assists us in creating press releases, speeches, Q&As, and even info sheets for media interviews. We're currently developing a specialized AI agent that automates this text creation and will be designed to understand our

corporate tone, preferred terminology, and even the communication style of our executives. AI-generated images also help us reduce reliance on stock photos, improving brand consistency and compliance while lowering costs. On top of that, AI will play a crucial role in marketing automation. Instead of manually managing customer engagement, AI will help us analyze user behavior, optimize campaigns, and personalize communication at scale.

One of the biggest signs of success is that our communication team has repositioned itself within the company. We're no longer just storytellers; we're enablers of digital transformation. AI allows us to contribute more strategically to business goals, such as lead generation, personalized marketing, and sales enablement.

EXEMPLARY USE CASES AT CLARIANT



Clarita - Clariant's AI-powered assistant

- › **Integrated reporting:** The preparation of the integrated annual report is a complex project with a high workload and colleagues from different areas of the company, most of whom are not communication professionals. Clarita helps to reduce the workload and improve stylistic and semantic consistency by, for example, drafting early versions of chapters or breaking up long sections into shorter, more readable blocks. There are also plans to use Clarita as a chatbot to help readers navigate the report by providing contextual answers rather than requiring them to manually search the document.
- › **Image creation:** At Clariant, stock images are often used. With 10,000 employees, keeping track of licenses is a challenge – leading to double payments or, worse, unlicensed use. AI-based image generation opens up new possibilities. A custom AI tool was trained on landscape and nature images. Based on the results, an internal solution has been developed with the IT department. The goal: generate compliant, on-brand images with simple prompts.

DUDA: AI can be a good starting point for ideation and inspiration, including thought starters and initial drafts of communications to get past “blank page syndrome” more quickly. At Goodyear, we find AI to be very helpful when you need different versions of a message; the tools are good at increasing or decreasing the complexity of content for various channels and audiences.

AI can also be a huge time saver when it comes to summarizing research, meeting notes or transcripts and

distilling the information down into the critical themes that support strategic communications planning. For us, that's the key – using AI in ways that free up the time spent on non-value-added tasks so we can spend more time on strategic work.

SCHALLER: AI-powered content creation has been particularly effective for communicators at SAP for assisting in drafting press releases, briefing documents, and executive LinkedIn posts, ensuring consistency and efficiency. Media

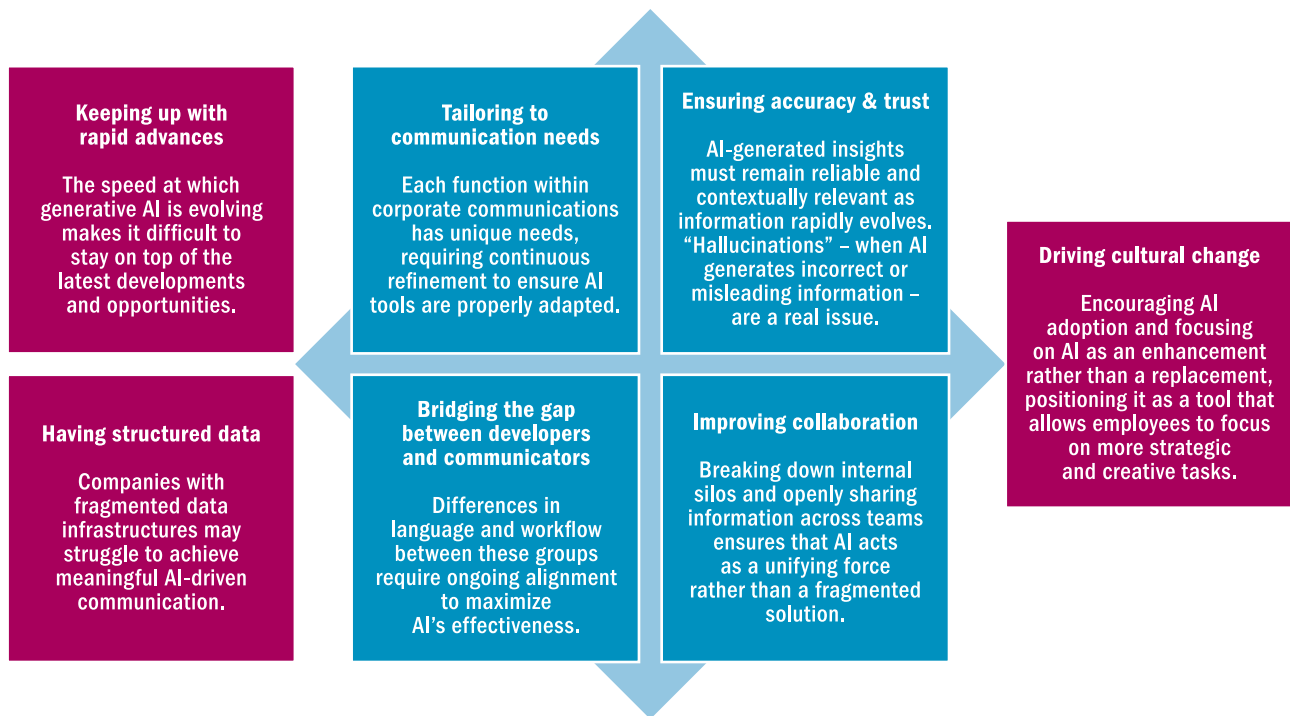
monitoring and sentiment analysis tools provide real-time insights into how SAP’s brand and messages are perceived across various channels around the world.

Early results indicate improved efficiency, particularly in automating repetitive tasks such as briefing document preparation, media monitoring, and sentiment analysis. AI

is helping us generate high-quality content while freeing up time for strategic initiatives. However, developing real-time data validation mechanisms is a critical focus in our next phase. AI must be able to “unlearn” outdated data as quickly as it learns new insights to prevent misinformation.

BARRIERS TO ADOPTING AI-POWERED COMMUNICATION

Based on insights from SAP, Clariant, and Goodyear, the most pressing hurdles to adopting AI-driven communication include:



ENGAGING PEOPLE

How are you ensuring that your team members are aligned with the shift to AI-driven communication?

SCHALLER: We’ve taken a self-learning approach at SAP, allowing individuals to explore AI at their own pace. We facilitate study groups where team members share

the latest AI developments and best practices, ensuring continuous learning and collaboration. Given that we are a software company, many of our colleagues are already tech-savvy and eager to experiment with AI. Our guiding principle is that AI won’t take your job – but someone who’s good at using AI might.

We've found that most of our colleagues have a positive or neutral stance toward AI adoption. An initial survey among Global Communications colleagues revealed that 93% are either very positive, positive, or neutral regarding the impact of AI on their jobs. By fostering an open and supportive learning environment, we encourage everyone to explore AI's potential. Rather than enforcing adoption, we provide the necessary resources, support, and motivation to ensure all team members can leverage AI effectively in their daily work.

DUDA: We've made AI part of our intentional skill development at Goodyear by including updates and tutorials in our global communication team meetings, led by our own in-house experts and external guest speakers. We also share best practices and use cases through a series we call "AI in Action," which features specific examples from across the team that illustrate how they're using AI to be more efficient and productive.

Both initiatives support skill development and encourage our team members to own their experiences with AI. We want everyone to see AI is not something to be feared and that they should to jump in and see for themselves how it can further their creativity and effectiveness as communicators.

ROLKER: We've taken a proactive approach to AI upskilling. Training sessions, internal workshops, and hands-on projects help our team members become comfortable with AI tools. We also encourage experimentation – employees can test AI applications in their daily work without fearing mistakes.

Additionally, we integrate AI into our daily workflows gradually. Instead of overwhelming the team with sudden changes, we introduce AI solutions in phases. For example, we first used AI for draft writing before expanding to automated content generation. This step-by-step approach fosters confidence and adoption.

Communication and transparency are key. We openly discuss AI's strengths and limitations, ensuring that our team understands that AI is a supporting tool, not a replacement for human creativity and judgment. We also emphasize real-world impact. When employees see how AI reduces repetitive work and allows them to focus on high-value tasks, they become more willing to embrace it. Additionally, we highlight success stories from colleagues who've used AI to enhance their productivity or to create additional value for our businesses.

RISE OF AI-SAVVY COMMUNICATORS

Have you observed changes in the profiles or roles of communication professionals as AI becomes more integrated?

DUDA: It's less about new roles and more about changing the way we work on a day-to-day basis. If you leverage AI to be more efficient and effective, the time savings can really add up. From time saved searching for information, summarizing information, or writing a first draft, we know that integrating AI into our daily work lets us complete common tasks faster and have more time to think.

SCHALLER: We're seeing the rise of AI-savvy communicators, so professionals who can effectively leverage AI tools for strategic messaging are becoming key assets. Traditional communication roles are evolving to include elements of data analysis, AI prompt engineering, and digital strategy. Additionally, AI ethics advocates are emerging, ensuring AI-generated communication aligns with ethical guidelines and SAP's corporate values.

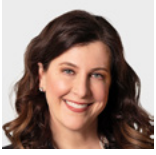
New role models are already emerging – those who can bridge the gap between technology and human storytelling. These professionals not only use AI effectively but also champion responsible AI adoption within corporate communication. Coming from media relations, there's one thing I don't think has changed: Comms will stay a people's business.

ROLKER: Of course, a shift to AI is only possible if you adapt your job profiles and acquire new skills. However, the mindset for this was already in place, enabling the entire team to embrace the change. Specifically, writing and storytelling remain crucial, but analytical and technical skills are gaining importance. Communicators who understand AI tools and can integrate them effectively into workflows are becoming highly valuable.

We're also seeing a shift in how communication teams interact with other departments. Traditionally, PR and marketing operated separately from IT and data analytics. Now, communicators need to collaborate closely with these functions to maximize AI's potential.

New role models are emerging – professionals who are not just great communicators but also AI-savvy strategists. The most successful teams are those that embrace AI as an enabler rather than seeing it as a threat. And most importantly, you can only win as a team. Collaboration not competition is the key to success.

CONTRIBUTORS



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This article is based on interviews conducted by the managing editor, Dr. Michelle Wloka.