How Business Can Maximize Opportunities and Mitigate Risks When Using Generative AI

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Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and products have proliferated since the public introduction of ChatGPT in the fall of 2022. These new applications have the potential to significantly change the way marketing, public relations and communications firms and their workers operate. In this white paper, I outline best practices for agencies to maximize opportunities and minimize risks when using generative AI.

This matters because firms like ours should consider exploration of generative AI tools a must, not a maybe. However, leaders must balance value creation opportunities with the risks involved in generative AI by delivering clear guidelines on the use of these tools and providing ongoing education and training to ensure employees steer clear of potential risks.

First, some definitions:

Artificial intelligence (AI) — The ability of software to perform tasks that traditionally require human intelligence.

Generative AI — AI that is typically built using more advanced models and has capabilities that earlier AI did not have, such as the ability to generate content. Generative AI models, in the words of a [Harvard Business Review article](#), "recover patterns and relationships, which they then use to create rules, and then make judgments and predictions, when responding to a prompt."

Large language models (LLMs) — AI models that can process massive amounts of unstructured text and learn the relationships between words or portions of words. GPT-4 (which underlies [ChatGPT](#) and [Bing](#)) and PaLM2 (the model behind [Bard](#)) are examples of LLMs.

For the purposes of this article, I'm going to refer to generative AI, since that's the version most likely to be used by public relations, marketing and communications professionals.

GENERATIVE AI POLICY COMMITTEE

To guide the development of a social media policy for your business, consider establishing a governance/policy committee within your organization. The team members should include representatives from operations, HR, legal and the departments most likely to use generative AI (marketing, communications, PR, sales, digital).

The goal of the committee should be to create a usable and actionable policy that can be shared with employees, vendors, partners, freelancers and others to whom it would apply.

5 Steps for Establishing a Generative AI Policy

When the committee is established and ready to compose guidelines for the use of generative AI by employees, follow these best practices:

1. **Determine which generative AI tools can help** your employees and evaluate the opportunities provided by these tools. For public relations, marketing and communications professionals, generative AI tools may be used for:

   - Creating first drafts
   - Developing outlines
   - Personalizing marketing material
   - Summarizing or simplifying text
   - Writing introductions to human-generated content

   - Brainstorming new product ideas
   - Communicating with customers
   - Writing product descriptions
   - Creating images or models
   - Generating and testing software code

2. **Create a clear understanding of the risks** involved in using generative AI, including:

   - **Hallucination:** An AI hallucination occurs when a large language model makes up false information or facts which aren't based on real data or events.

   - **Inaccuracy:** Similar to hallucination, generative AI models have been shown to simply get things wrong. Popular Science reported on a study from Standford and UC Berkeley that claimed ChatGPT's accuracy has actually gotten worse in just a few months.

   - **Fairness/Bias:** The Harvard Business Review has neatly summarized this potential problem: "AI can help identify and reduce the impact of human biases, but it can

also make the problem worse by baking in and deploying biases at scale in sensitive application areas."

- **Privacy/security:** This is especially true for public relations firms—which often deal in sensitive, private, or embargoed information. There is no guarantee that confidential information will not be linked, shared, or used publicly by an AI tool.

- **Lack of sources:** While Bing's version of ChatGPT does often provide attribution, most other models don't provide sources. This can make it difficult to fact-check assertions or claims made by generative AI.

- **Plagiarism/intellectual property infringement:** Generative AI has an intellectual property problem because it's often difficult to tell if the output is effectively plagiarizing already existing content. This can create serious risks for communication agencies, which often write blog posts, press releases, social media content, and more, that is expected to be original.

- **Mediocre quality of content:** Content created by generative AI is often bland, boring, or anodyne. This can lead to subpar products if used without any human review and editing.

- **Brand voice:** While using the right prompts to improve generative AI copy can help, it's still rare for these models to produce written content that actually reflects the desired brand voice for a company or individual.

- **Lack of expertise, experience, authority or trustworthiness:** These factors are part of Google's Search Quality Rate Guidelines that it uses to evaluate and rank web page content. Web pages written by generative AI will likely score poorly on the measure, making it harder to improve search rankings.

3. **Establish clear guidelines** for the use of generative AI by employees. These policies can follow this outline:

- **Purpose:** To establish guidelines and policies for employees' use of AI.

- **Overview:** Examples of how generative AI can be used by employees.

- **Eligibility:** Whom the policy applies to (employees, interns, vendors, freelancers, agencies, etc.).

- **Policy:** Clarity on when and how employees and others can use generative AI tools. This can fall anywhere on the spectrum from prohibited to open use. Most businesses will likely settle somewhere in the middle by providing limited use parameters for employees.

- **Training:** How to educate and train your employees about the use of generative AI.

- **Ethical Use:** Make clear that these tools should not be used to create content that is inappropriate, discriminatory, or otherwise harmful to others or the company.

- **Monitoring:** Remind employees that the usual monitoring policies apply to generative AI as well.

The goal of the policy should be to allow employees the freedom to use AI tools to improve their performance, while having clear limits on when and how to use these tools.

4. **Schedule training and education** to ensure understanding and buy-in from employees and new hires. This can take place in a special session or during routine staff meetings. Some companies, like PWC, rolled out mandatory training for their entire US workforce. Others are requiring all employees to learn prompt engineering. How public relations, marketing and communications managers promulgate their policies and provide employee support will determine much of their success in using generative AI going forward.

5. **Revisit the policy** on an regular cadence. The technology and rules governing generative AI can change rapidly, so it is important to ensure your guidelines are current. Track updates to the different tools, follow laws or regulations passed by federal or state legislatures, and talk to peers to keep your policy current and your employees informed.

CONCLUSION

Each business' generative AI policy will be unique, based on the kinds of workers who will be using generative AI, the tools they'll be using, the risks posed by their use, and the company's culture and values. It's critical to develop and disseminate a sensible policy that will help—not scare or intimidate—employees so your business can safely use generative AI as a digital thought partner and lower the cost of cognition and new ideas.

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