

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING · 2026 SURVEY OF BUSINESS SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS LEADERS

Scaling Business School Communications with AI

Progress, Barriers and Opportunities for AI in Business School Communications

ABOUT THE SURVEY

In August and September 2026, the consultancy Experiential Communications invited more than 100 business schools across the United States, Europe and Latin America to participate in a survey. Ten communications leaders responded. The results are not a census of the sector, but they do surface questions and insights that every marketing communications team can learn from, regardless of its size. Quotes are anonymous unless respondents gave permission to be identified.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Most teams use AI. Few have built systems around it.

There is a real difference between asking a chatbot to tighten an email and setting up an AI project that works in the background like an extra member of staff, tracking coverage, spotting opportunities and preparing first drafts. The first saves minutes. The second changes what a small communications team can accomplish.

Picture what systematic AI use could look like at three levels:

- **The individual.** Communicators hand routine execution to AI; time saved can be allocated to strategy, relationships, innovation and judgment.
- **The team.** Communications teams that previously felt understaffed are leveraging AI to perform tasks and surface opportunities that would have never been possible.
- **The institution.** Every dean, leader and faculty member can draw on a communications assistant built on the school's own best practices.

None of this requires waiting for better technology. It requires deploying AI strategically and systematically, and building a culture that makes time to learn.

SURVEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

5.4 out of 10

Average self-rated AI adoption across the surveyed schools

0 of 10

Schools describing AI as fully embedded in communications

6 of 10

Say lack of time or accuracy concerns are the biggest obstacles to full adoption

4 of 10

Communications teams play an active role in internal AI guidance

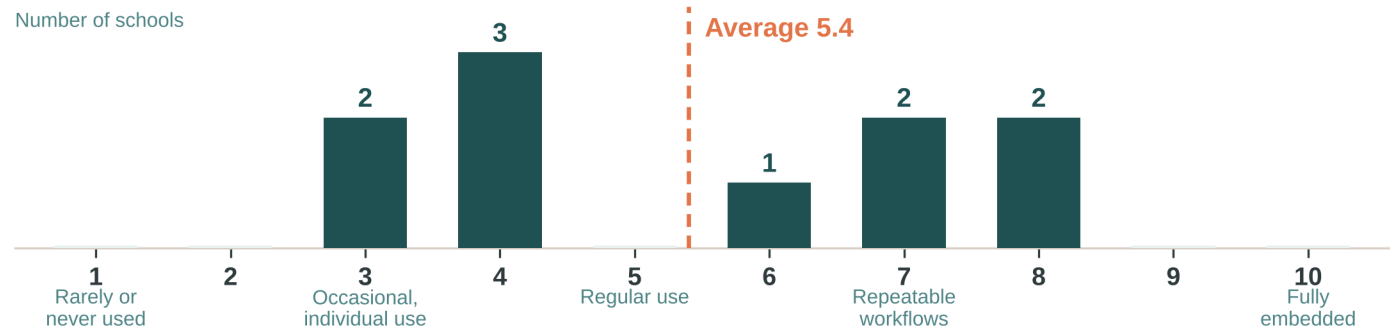
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATORS IN OUR AI WORLD

1. The strategist who builds communications systems
2. Internal communicator for the organization's AI strategy
3. Trainer and capability builder around AI and communications

SURVEY FINDINGS

Where business school communications teams are today

How would you rate your communications team’s current level of AI adoption?



What is the biggest obstacle to greater AI adoption?



Time and accuracy reinforce each other. Teams that never have time to experiment will often experience outcomes that are not reliable, so accuracy concerns persist.

Has your school communicated AI guidance and best practices internally?



- Yes, the communications team has played an active role
- Yes, efforts have been led by an office outside of communications
- Limited efforts so far
- Not sure

AI initiatives, policies and cultural changes need to be clearly communicated on an ongoing basis to internal audiences with varying perspectives about AI. Communications teams are well placed to lead this work. It requires more than one-off announcements; it calls for ongoing campaigns that highlight best practices and create opportunities for sharing and community, surfacing lessons that benefit everyone.

NOTEWORTHY EXAMPLE

Ohad Kadan made AI one of his strategic priorities when he became dean at Arizona State University’s W. P. Carey School of Business in 2022. That commitment helped inspire the *Coffee, Tea, and ChatGPT* learning initiative. Held several times a year, the event brings together around 75 faculty and staff to hear guest speakers and share how they use AI in teaching, research and daily work.

“It’s part of our role within the department to promote these events and, more broadly, contribute to AI learning at W. P. Carey,” said Shay Moser, Senior Managing Editor in the school’s Marketing and Communications Department. “*Coffee, Tea, and ChatGPT* has helped scale learning, and our department contributes articles and promotes it through the dean’s newsletter and social media.”

Learning continues within smaller teams. The school’s marketing and communications team meets regularly to discuss AI implementation, with a focus on sharing and learning from one another. As the W. P. Carey School shows, learning must be scheduled, not left to spare moments, and communications teams have a part to play.

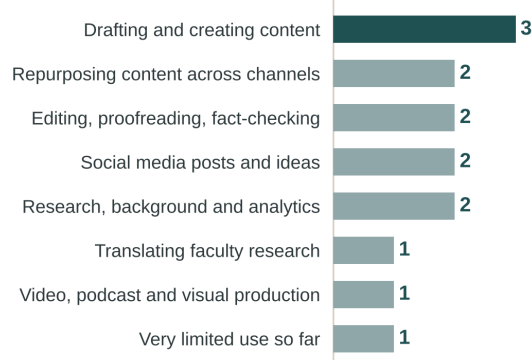
SURVEY FINDINGS

Where AI is already delivering value

Can you share an example of how AI has improved your media relations work?



Beyond media relations, where is AI delivering the most value?



"...the reporters it suggests often are not relevant for that pitch, no longer work in journalism, or, on a couple of occasions, are dead."

SURVEY RESPONDENT

"Media relations are fundamentally about trust, judgment and personal relationships with journalists, and I don't think AI can replace that."

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Most of the value so far comes from speed: first drafts, summaries and media lists. Those gains are real but mostly sit with individuals. The above respondent quotes underscore the importance of human verification. For another survey question, just two respondents could point to a faculty member using AI effectively on their own to communicate research. Communications teams have a real opportunity to introduce AI tools that help all faculty communicate their research, expertise, school initiatives and key messages related to the programs they teach in.

FROM AD HOC TO SYSTEM

Three applications that scale across the individual, team and organization

Important caveat: start with strategy. Define your goals first, then build the workflows that serve them.

1 - Turn dense research into communications opportunities

Reviewing a lengthy journal article and identifying the key takeaways for journalists, practitioners and other external audiences can take hours. Arizona State University's W. P. Carey School of Business created a custom GPT called Research Assistant to identify a paper's main findings and real-world implications in minutes. "I still verify everything with the researcher and make the final editorial decisions, but AI helps me get up to speed faster and turn complex research into more accessible content for our audiences," said Moser.

2 - Build a media relations system around priority journalists

In a recent Experiential Communications engagement, we helped a university set up a ChatGPT project containing its 15 or so priority education journalists, its faculty experts and its priority research. A weekly scheduled task summarizes those journalists' latest coverage and suggests angles to pitch. Using this project, a team member can also attach a new paper and ask for media opportunities. The project recommends whom to pitch and why. Also, within minutes, the same project drafts two-page interview briefings in the university's branding, covering logistics, the journalist's recent coverage, likely questions and key messages. Such tools can be used by communicators and stakeholders throughout a school or university.

3 - Spot speaking opportunities before the deadline passes

Discovering that a dean should have been on a conference program after the call for speakers has closed is a familiar frustration. A scheduled AI task can deliver a weekly digest of relevant events and open calls, filtered by the school's priorities. Communications teams can run one for school leaders, and faculty can adapt it to their own research areas.

FROM EXPERIMENT TO SYSTEM

Four principles, informed by the survey and by experience in the field

- **Start with strategy.** Without one, AI use stays scattered. Define goals, audiences and key messages first, then decide where AI can help. Store the strategy in a dedicated AI project so every output starts from the same foundation.
- **Schedule the learning.** Time to experiment was the most cited barrier. Learning must be scheduled, not spontaneous.
- **Give communications a role in AI guidance.** Communications teams know the school's voice, audiences and reputational risks, yet only four of ten surveyed teams help shape internal AI guidance. They should be at the table with leadership, IT and legal.
- **Ensure human oversight is incorporated.** AI can misread findings and invent information. Human verification is part of the system, not an optional extra.

QUESTIONS FOR DEANS AND MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORS

- Does the marketing communications team have a clear strategy that accounts for AI opportunities?
- Are there clear policies on how AI should be used in communications?
- Which workflows that benefit individual communicators could be adapted and scaled for wider internal audiences?
- Have faculty, program leaders and other spokespeople learned how to use AI to communicate their work to external audiences? If not, what would build that capability?
- Is time set aside for individual and group learning and experimentation?

STRATEGY FIRST. AI ENABLED.

Experiential Communications

We help business schools generate opportunities and impact through strategic communications, supported by AI. Our *Knowledge-to-Impact Communications System* starts with strategy (goals, audiences and key messages), then incorporates AI workflows to deliver on that strategy, keeping human judgment at the center. Every engagement is measured against three outcomes: clarity (knowing what to communicate, to whom and how), capability (using AI effectively, beyond basic tool use) and momentum (measurable progress toward specific goals). Founder and principal Kevin Anselmo previously held full-time communications roles at two top business schools and has advised more than 35 universities and organizations worldwide.

Individual Coaching

A personal communications strategy plus an AI workflow built around it, for leaders, communicators and faculty.

Team Advisory

A shared strategy, a set of AI tools and related training for a communications team, research center or department.

Experiential Workshops

Hands-on sessions that give faculty, leaders and communicators a strategy, a practical AI workflow and the skills to keep building on both.

Set up a complimentary session to explore the questions and insights highlighted in this Executive Briefing.

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