

Report examines impact of technology on society and communication industry

Findings released from the 2019 USC Annenberg Global Communications Report examined the impact of technology on society and the communication industry and shows that the majority of global public relations professionals surveyed in the report predict the next few years will bring dramatic change to the communication industry.



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83% believe technological innovations will be a powerful driver of that change, and most believe not all of it will be good.

More engaged citizen

Three out of five public relations professionals (61%) predict that future communication technology will cause the average citizen to become more engaged. However, the same number (61%) believe that engagement will be based on misinformation, which 74% think will create a more polarised society. PR students globally are slightly more optimistic. Only 43% predict the citizens will be more misinformed in the next five years, while 53% say society will be more polarized.

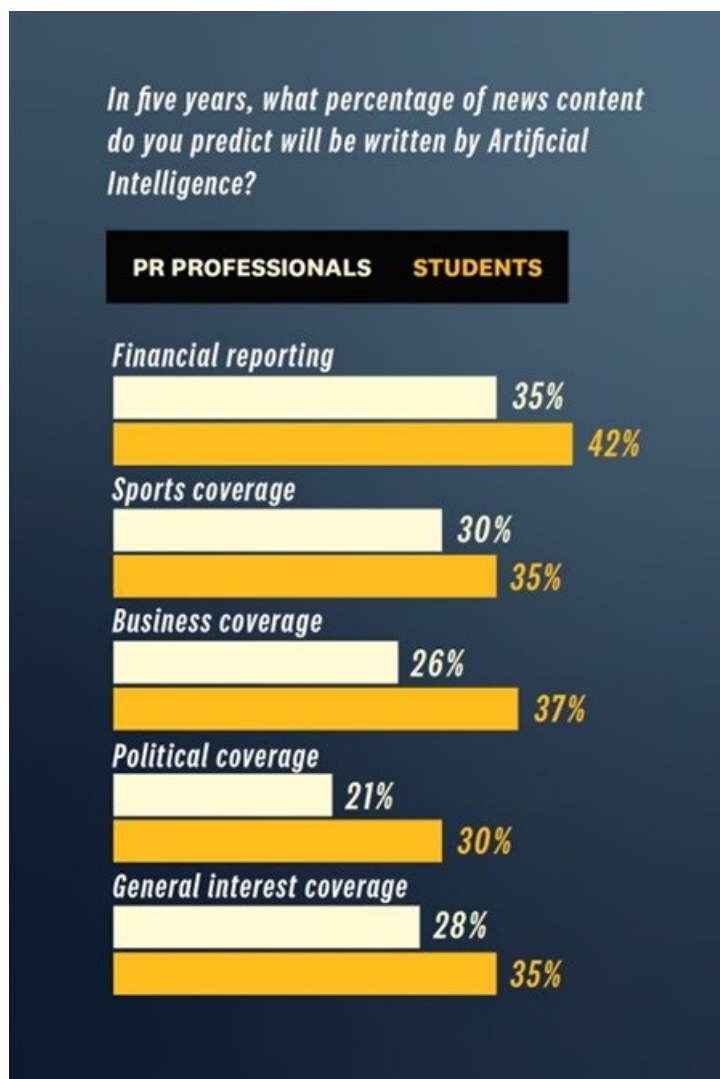
“Since its inception, our industry has championed the art of public relations,” said Fred Cook, director of the USC Center for Public Relations. “Now, we must combine that art with science. Our future relies upon our ability to adopt new tech tools to analyse complex data, engage diverse audiences and measure tangible impact. However, communicators have a profound responsibility to employ these tools to accurately inform and educate the public — and to denounce those who do not.”

While the number of technology tools available to the PR profession is growing exponentially, few are viewed as very important to communication work currently being done. PR executives cite media monitoring services (44%), which have been around for years, as the most important tech tool for their current work.

When asked to predict what will be most valuable for future work, social listening (54%), website analytics (54%) and social media management (51%) rise to the top. Even though only 18% of all PR executives believe artificial intelligence will be a very important technology for them in the future, they predict 35% of financial reporting and 30% of sports coverage will be written by robots in five years.

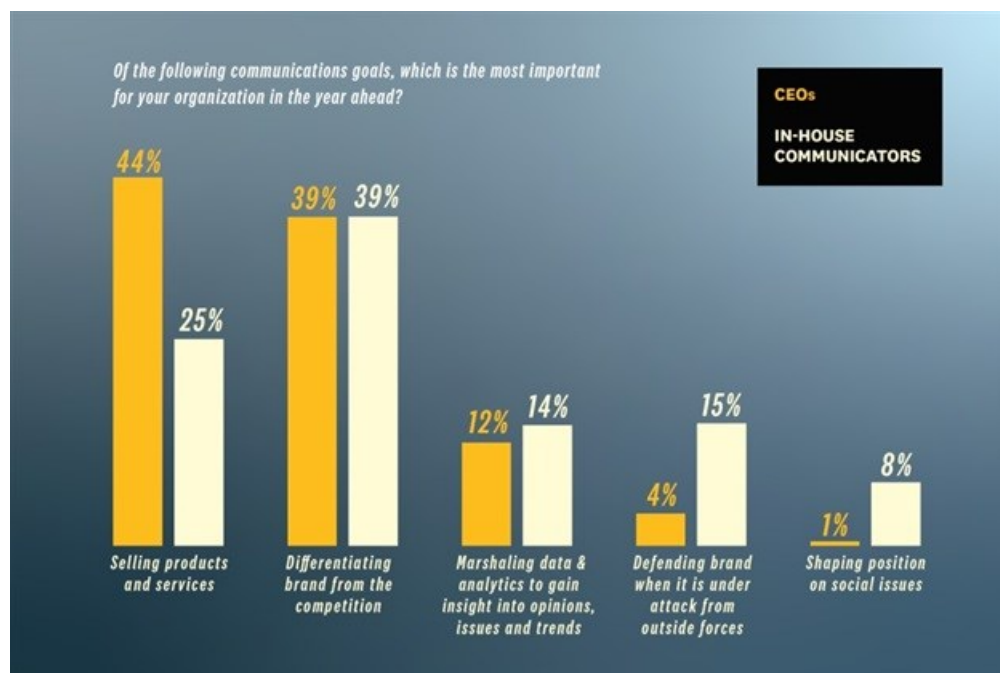
Humans vs machines

Technology advancements in the communication industry also raise the question of whether machines or humans will be more important in the future. The survey participants gave a mixed response. While nearly half (47%) of PR professionals answered, “Human capital will be more important in the next five years,” another 30% expect they will have equal importance. Students predict the machines will rise: 46% say that, in the future, technology will be more important than humans in the communication industry, while only 32% say the opposite.



Daniel Munslow, director of MCC Consulting, and local partner to the Global Communications Report highlighted another important aspect of the report. This year, the Report surveyed an incredibly important stakeholder for communicators – CEOs. The findings show that 44% of CEO respondents feel that their most important communication goal for 2019 is to sell their products and services.

For 39%, their primary goal is to differentiate their company's brand from the competition. The number one goal for the communicator is also to differentiate their brand from the competition.



Munslow says, “As competition between brands continues to play out around the digitisation and customer services pillars, managing reputation becomes all the more complex, with organisations focused on amplifying their corporate narrative to win share of market and share of wallet.”

He adds, “Communication professionals have a profound obligation to shape and defend organisational reputation to enhance return on investment to business, customers, and society”.

The report can be downloaded [here](#).

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