

Warsaw 11, 2023

ICCO Principles for Ethical Use of AI in Public Relations

Public relations and communications professionals in PR agencies are increasingly utilising AI technologies to enhance their work and deliver impactful results. However, as AI becomes more prevalent in the PR industry, it is crucial to establish guidelines that ensure AI's ethical and responsible use.

These guidelines provide PR professionals with the necessary principles to navigate the complexities of AI while upholding ethical standards, respecting privacy rights and copyrights, and maintaining client confidentiality.

By adhering to these principles, PR agencies can leverage AI effectively to deliver strategic consultations, produce a range of content, manage crisis and issues communications, and foster positive and trust-based relationships with journalists and other stakeholders.

AI-generated content refers to content or results that are produced entirely by artificial intelligence without direct human intervention in the generation process.

AI-assisted content refers to processes, decisions, or content where artificial intelligence plays a supportive or augmentative role, often enhancing or informing human decisions or efforts but not taking over entirely.

AI-powered term refers to any use of AI, including generative AI.

The Warsaw Principles

1. Transparency, Disclosure, and Authenticity

PR professionals should transparently disclose when generative AI is used to create purely artificial content that might pose a threat of distorting the public's perceptions of reality. Disclosing the use of AI-generated content is vital, especially in the age of deep fakes.

Examples:

- Unambiguously announce when generative AI is employed to generate reality-like content to avoid misrepresentation and maintain ethical transparency.
- Clearly notify users when they're interacting with an AI chatbot rather than a human representative.
- Inform clients when and how AI will be utilised in a PR campaign.
- Understand the technology's limitations and biases and how they can influence decision-making.
- Collaborate with associations, governing bodies, research-based organizations who are working in AI/ are AI experts to ensure the technology is being utilised in ways that align with ethical and professional standards.

2. Accuracy, Fact-Checking, and Combatting Disinformation:

PR professionals should ensure that AI-powered content is accurate, reliable, and fact-checked before dissemination. Using AI tools for fact-checking and debunking disinformation and misinformation is encouraged; however, note that many publicly available generative AI tools regularly deliver inaccurate information, so fact-check in sources outside of AI tools as well. Given the potential of AI to create and disseminate misinformation rapidly, PR professionals must be especially vigilant against the inadvertent or intentional spread of such information.

Examples:

- Confirm the accuracy of information, data, and analysis before incorporating it into client reports or media materials.
- Cross-reference information with timely and credible sources to validate authenticity and precision.
- Ensure AI-powered translation tools accurately render the intended meaning by cross-checking translations with native or native-level speakers.
- Ensure that AI tools designed to boost content reach do not inadvertently amplify disinformation or promote misleading narratives.

3. Privacy, Data Protection, and Responsible Sharing:

PR professionals must handle customer data and client-privileged information with utmost care and comply with data protection regulations. They have the responsibility of sharing verified and non-deceptive content.

Examples:

- Ensure algorithms used for media monitoring respect privacy rights and refrain from accessing or storing personal information.
- Anonymize and aggregate customer data to preserve privacy while generating insights for strategic PR campaigns. Do not use any private, protected, or sensitive client information to train public AI models.
- Take steps to protect the privacy of individual persons whose sentiments are analysed, guaranteeing their data isn't linked to their identity.

4. Bias Detection, Mitigation, and Inclusivity

PR professionals should actively identify and address biases that may arise from AI-powered content, and explore the use of AI for more inclusive campaigns. It is also important to use diverse training data for AI models to ensure inclusivity.

- Evaluate AI-assisted media materials to identify and correct any potential biases in target selection or language.
- Regularly scrutinise AI algorithms to ensure they don't perpetuate stereotypes and politically or ideologically motivated biases in content recommendations.
- Use human judgment to select images, words, and videos from content created by Generative AI.
- Constantly monitor and assess AI algorithms to minimise biases in influencer selection, ensuring fair representation and diversity.

5. Intellectual Property, Copyright Compliance, and Media Literacy:

PR professionals must respect copyright laws and intellectual property rights when using AI in all forms. They are encouraged to promote media literacy about AI-powered content and deep fakes

Examples:

- Read the terms and conditions of AI tools you use and subscribe to understand their training source materials, IP, and copyright compliance commitments and other policies.
- Confirm that AI-generated images or videos don't infringe upon copyrighted material and secure necessary permissions for such assets.
- Cross-check written AI-powered content to ensure it doesn't plagiarise or violate copyright laws.
- Guarantee that AI algorithms for content curation comply with fair use policies and do not breach copyright restrictions.

6. Human Oversight, Intervention, and Collaboration:

PR professionals should incorporate human oversight and intervention in the AI-powered content creation process, and collaborate with AI specialists for insights and guidance.

Examples:

- Engage human experts to review and validate strategic insight and crisis response messages prior to dissemination.
- Share professional human insights and expertise in opinion pieces to guarantee accuracy and relevance.
- Incorporate human professionals to review and tailor AI-assisted media pitches, ensuring relevance and quality.

7. Contextual Understanding, Adaptation, and Personalization:

PR professionals must analyse the context and appropriateness of AI-assisted content for different channels and target audiences, and explore the potential of AI for tailored experiences.

Examples:

- Tailor AI-assisted content to conform to varied social media channels' tone, style, and platform-specific requirements.
- Review and adapt AI-assisted content to cater to the preferences and expectations of diverse audiences.
- Adjust AI-assisted content to respect cultural nuances and sensitivities when engaging international markets.

8. Responsible Automation and Efficiency:

PR professionals should leverage AI to automate repetitive tasks and enhance efficiency without compromising ethical standards and professional expertise.

Examples:

- Employ AI tools to automate media monitoring and analysis, thus allowing PR professionals to concentrate on strategic insights and decision-making.
- Use AI algorithms to create content calendars and schedule recommendations, optimising workflow and resource allocation.
- Deploy AI to create content variations from approved source materials, as long as confidential information is not fed into AI tools.

9. Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback:

PR professionals should regularly monitor and evaluate the performance and impact of AI-powered content, and create a feedback loop where stakeholders can voice concerns.

Examples:

- Continually assess the accuracy and effectiveness of AI-generated sentiment analysis to ensure it aligns with human interpretation.
- Monitor the engagement and response to AI-assisted media materials to measure their effectiveness and refine future strategies.
- Continually assess AI-assisted visual and written content for audience feedback.

10. Ethical Professional Development, Education, and AI Advocacy:

PR professionals should engage in continuous learning and professional development to stay updated on AI advancements and ethical considerations. They are responsible for advocating ethical AI use and practices in the broader media landscape.

Examples:

- Create education and discussion forums in your agencies/teams so employees at all stages of career development understand and can use AI frameworks.
- Participate in training programs and workshops focusing on the ethical use of AI, understand biases, and mitigate ethical challenges.
- Engage in industry forums, conferences, and discussions to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and encourage ethical AI adoption in the PR industry.

These guidelines stress the importance of transparency, accuracy, privacy protection, bias detection, intellectual property compliance, human oversight, contextual understanding, responsible automation, continuous monitoring, and professional development by providing a framework to navigate AI technologies' challenges and opportunities.

Adherence to these principles ensures that PR agencies employ AI effectively without causing harm or violating human rights, copyrights, privacy rights, or trademarks. Furthermore, it is imperative that PR professionals act as a bulwark against disinformation, preserving the integrity and trustworthiness of communications and PR in the digital age.

AI, as powerful as it is, should complement and not replace the human touch, invaluable expertise, judgment and creativity that PR professionals bring to the table. AI and its implications will keep changing, so adaptability and vigilance are vital when facing rapidly evolving AI technologies.

References:

ICCO Global Code of Ethics for PR Professionals

<https://iccopr.com/ethics/>

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - European Commission

https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/data-protection_en

Guidelines for AI Ethics in Public Relations - PR Council

<https://prcouncil.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PR-Council-Guidelines-on-Generative-AI-042423.pdf>

OpenAI: <https://openai.com/blog/how-should-ai-systems-behave>

AI in the Communications Industry 2023:

https://www.provokemedia.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/sp-pr-ai-report_final.pdf

The Future of AI in PR: <https://www.cision.ca/resources/webinars-events/future-ai-pr/>

Note: It is essential to consult up-to-date and relevant sources and guidelines specific to your region and industry to ensure compliance with ethical standards and legal requirements.