

The communications emergency

Why businesses must protect human communication in the age of AI



Businesses face an emergency communications challenge

Companies are investing time and money to help their employees learn about prompt engineering for Gen AI. While it is vital that we all learn to utilise AI's capabilities, **we must not lose sight of how to communicate clearly and succinctly with each other** and not just with Gen AI. More people are turning to digital communications rather than talking on the phone, by video conferencing or meeting face to face. We don't want to reach a point where we turn to a chatbot rather than a human, losing our communication skills to connect to one another.

Businesses need to invest time in developing a communications strategy that **encourages the use of the phone, video conferencing or face-to-face** to address this quandary. If action is not taken soon, we will face an emergency communications challenge that will have disastrous consequences for society.

Too much choice

With so many methods of communication to choose from, including email, video conferencing, text, social media and the phone (albeit somewhat of a rarity these days), our **communications have become ad hoc, overly complex and unclear**. Companies must devise a communications strategy to guide employees on which methods to use and for what purpose, ensuring they remain efficient and productive.

Employees often choose the easiest and fastest method, such as firing off an instant message or email, when it would be easier to pick up the phone. Without a clear communications strategy, messages are lost in translation, mistakes are made, and it is costly to the business.

Gen AI is penetrating the workplace and it is imperative that businesses recognise the need to reduce unclear messages. Ensure you **encourage human-to-human communication** by selecting the correct communication method for the audience and message, so it is received as intended.

Communications emergency

We are **in danger of losing the art of natural human communication** and connection by not using our voice, whether that's picking up the phone, participating in a video conference call, or even meeting face to face. This could be detrimental to society now and in the future, with many ramifications, including the **growth of loneliness**, which isolates us from human contact and reduces our connections even more.

AI assistant, not director

E&Y recently reported that **83% of UK employees use GenAI** at work, but we must remember that AI cannot replace human emotions, empathy, nuance, or the human experience. The danger is that **people will become too reliant on AI, treating its answers and output as definitive** and not fact-checking them, which is why guardrails and processes are essential.

As AI proliferates into our work and personal lives, we may soon be, if not already, turning to ChatGPT rather than a colleague to brainstorm or to ask for an opinion. This is a place we do NOT want to reach, and it is **critical that people work alongside AI, using it only as a reference or assistant, and not a director.**

Businesses are learning how to communicate with Gen AI through prompting, and to do this, you need to communicate clearly. **Define your objective, audience and context, and set the right tone.** If you don't get what you desire, go back and ask more questions to build on what you have. Using Gen AI forces you to think of different ways to ask for what you need, highlighting any unclear thinking or communication. The key is clear, concise communication, and businesses need to dedicate the same amount of time and resources to ensure all their communications are clear and concise. So, when you are planning to or implementing AI, don't forget to address your other communication methods as well. **AI should not be viewed or deployed in isolation** but holistically across your business as part of your overall strategy.

Generation Z, don't like speaking on the phone.

70%

of 18–34s prefer texting to phone calls.

Source:Uswitch

Lost in translation

People **prefer to send an email**, an instant message, or even a WhatsApp or Slack message to communicate with colleagues rather than picking up the phone because they think it's faster or they don't want to speak to someone. In some cases this true but it has its place.

A Uswitch survey revealed that the majority of **Gen-Z prefer digital communication methods over phonecalls**. More than half reported that if a call was from a number they didn't recognise, they thought it was bad news and **37% said they preferred voice notes to an actual conversation**.

Millennials and younger generations have reported 'phone phobia' and a fear of using the phone, saying that they experience anxiety during real-time conversations and feel awkward, so they avoid the phone.

Another factor that contributes to 'phone phobia' is when we all worked at home during lockdown in the Covid 19 pandemic, and people became lazy or lost their confidence to speak on the phone.

Focusing on communications

Businesses should develop a communications strategy that answers three questions:

1. **What are we trying to achieve?**

Decide whether you are informing, persuading, making a decision, building or deepening a relationship, supporting a customer with an issue, etc.

2. **Who is the audience we are communicating with?**

Employees, customers, media, suppliers

3. **Which channel is best?**

Or combination of channels is most suitable for your objective and audience?

Set key messages

Devise a set of key messages for all communications that can also be used in sales, marketing, HR, and throughout the business to ensure everyone is consistent and that your communications and messages provide clarity. Giving you a competitive advantage.

Close the loop

Encourage a 'close the loop' culture. When employees are working on a project together or attending a team meeting, whether it's via video conferencing or face-to-face, **encourage attendees to summarise the meeting and decide on the next steps so everyone is aware of the intended outcome.** This can be achieved with AI, but remember to talk it through over the phone, via video conferencing, or face-to-face to ensure the intended actions are delivered.

How to communicate clearly

Engage a specialist or utilise an in-house comms person to provide training on how to communicate clearly and concisely. This can cover AI prompting, writing emails and briefs, and, in general, how to express yourself and communicate with intent in a clear, concise and structured way. **Emphasise not to use jargon if it can be written in 'plain English'.** If you operate in a jargon-filled industry then ensure there is a human benefit attached to it.

Transparent communications

Adopt a culture that cultivates open and transparent communications where employees can communicate to you and each other about the positives and negatives.

Encourage Senior Managers to become good communicators by using the phone, video conferencing, and arranging face-to-face meetings to ensure communication flows freely and easily, so you do not become a company that operates in isolation, stuck behind a desk, scared to speak to each other in real time. This will help motivate and empower employees.

Businesses must acknowledge that communications issues, both internally and externally, can lead to severe problems and hinder growth. By reviewing overall communications and taking the time to review how they are used internally with employees, customers and suppliers, you can identify what steps need to be taken. It may reveal issues you didn't even know existed. Regularly, businesses **think they have a technical or process problem when, in fact, it is simply a communications problem** that can be solved easily.

It is also vital that this step is taken before implementing Generative AI so that the use of AI is seen as an overall strategy, even though AI is not strictly a communication method. An employee may talk to AI rather than a colleague, and a customer may talk to an AI chatbot, but a phone call might be of more value.

By creating a communication strategy and providing guidelines, your employees will take time to make a considered decision about which communication method to use rather than just firing off a quick instant message or email. It will also make them aware that **AI is intended to support communication, not replace it**. This will result in increased productivity, improved collaboration and connection with employees and your customers.

The communications strategy, if planned and used correctly, will result in clear, concise and consistent communications. Messages will be received, reducing wasted time going back and forth when communications get lost in translation.

What to use and when?

Phone

Senior management should advocate that using the phone is natural and normalise it, so instead of getting lost in lengthy email conversations, they too should pick up the phone to set the expectation. **By talking on the phone, tensions and misinterpretations can be cleared up quickly**, relationships can be deepened through the opportunity for an informal catch-up chat, complex or urgent problems can be discussed, or a quick call can be made to talk through an idea. This stops issues escalating and leading to lengthy and unnecessary email trails.

Our voice is the most powerful communication tool we have or will ever have, so let's not lose it. **Voice conveys our tone and is an indicator of how we are feeling**, which is essential to communication and understanding. Talking to each other helps build the human skills we must not lose, such as listening, empathy and sharing experiences in real time.

Video conferencing

Video conferencing has been around for years but took off during lockdown when we couldn't go into the office and meet face to face. It is brilliant for team meetings, a distributed workforce, and great for screen sharing when you are working on a document together or going through a presentation. However, it must be used sparingly, as **employees will develop video conferencing fatigue and lose interest**. You also need to state whether the camera should be on or off (we think it should always be on).

AI is a great tool for transcribing the minutes and actions but ensure you discuss the next steps and who is working on what to close the loop.

Email

Email remains the top of business communication method with **97% of professionals using it daily** (Statista, December 2025) Ensure email is used for a formal record of a conversation, to share information people can refer back to, and to keep multiple people in the loop.



Email is king of business comms
376 billion are sent every day

Ensure it is written in clear, plain English and kept short. If the conversation is convoluted, it may be more effective to use the phone. AI can assist with writing emails, but do not rely on it to write your communications, as **people can tell whether a human or AI has written it**, and the **email will lose its personal touch**. However, AI is excellent for grammar and punctuation assistance and for helping you find the words to write the first draft.

Social media



LinkedIn, Slack, Whatsapp. These tools are great for quick communication, especially if you want an instant response and are already in a conversation and need the answer. They are also good for broadcasting information and building a following and community. However, be selective when using them to communicate with colleagues and customers, and **do not fire off quick messages without thought**, as this is where mistakes occur.

When using socials for customers and LinkedIn, again use AI to help generate a first-draft of content, but ensure it is fact-checked and aligned with your AI guardrails so your content and messaging is authentic.

Face-to-face

Face-to-face communication is critical for sales and important meetings, helping to build and deepen relationships and gain trust. In human communication, especially face-to-face, we read each other's facial expressions and body language. Sometimes we know what's going on before the other person speaks. **We can sense whether someone is happy, stressed, or suffering, and we can tailor our communications accordingly.**

Face-to-face meetings are happening less with remote working but they are essential in business not only to deliver outcomes but also to connect with each other. And we must not lose this in the face of AI.

Don't rely on AI

As we interact with AI more and more, it will become increasingly difficult for us to navigate human relationships because AI's answers are polished and designed to fulfil our needs and provide instant gratification, whereas humans are messy and not perfect. Relying too much on AI for answers and not on humans can also reduce our empathy skills.

2 bn

people use AI today, with 88% people using it in at least one business function to improve efficiency and productivity.

Source: Menlov

The AI algorithm can be programmed to express empathy, but **real human emotion lies in listening to and understanding people** who are angry, disappointed and judgmental, and dealing with human relationships is complex. AI is not trained on this, therefore we may prefer the automated, happy, perfect response of a chatbot than a real person, again reducing our human communication and connection skills. We cannot expect humans to act and behave like AI, if we are in very dangerous territory.

We use or will use AI in almost all communications, such as drafting emails, summarising calls and meetings, generating content for sales and marketing, and powering chatbots. But **we must use AI to aid us, not direct us**. You don't want your communications to sound like they have been written by AI, and even if you think you will get away with it, you won't. A business's communications need to be authentic.

Businesses need to ensure that AI is used to help them create clear and succinct communications for first draft and then fact check it, check for biases, nuances etc. **Implementing guidelines where humans are responsible for the final message, tone and channel.**

Training

Phone skills

Teaching basic phone skills may seem very elementary, but it is in fact critical, as our communications are in a state of emergency, especially with the explosion of AI infiltrating our work and personal lives. **If we don't address this now, we will naturally talk to AI first and all the time instead of humans.** The demise of human communication skills is not good overall.

For Baby Boomers and Generation X, it may seem ridiculous that we are teaching people how to use the phone, but remember we only had two methods of communication, email and the phone, so it was easier for us. Now we have an array of communication methods, which is fantastic but harder to navigate and requires a process or guidelines on how to use them, which should then dovetail into how to use AI.

AI

Provide training on when, where and how to use AI with prompt engineering, implementing guardrails and checking processes as discussed above.

Human communication skills

Providing **training on soft skills is crucial** as AI advances. These include empathy, listening, critical thinking, questioning, and storytelling, which make us human. Teach employees, particularly the younger generation on how to **handle difficult conversations on the phone and face to face**. Hold workshops to help them build and develop their confidence in communicating with people, so they don't want to hide in the digital world all the time.

Businesses that implement an effective communications strategy, **using a range of methods**, will **communicate more clearly and concisely**, ensuring their messages reach the right audience. Now is the time for businesses to address the increasing communications emergency, and they should strive to **preserve the importance of human-to-human communication** and connection. Creating a balance between communication methods and AI before we not only get lost in translation but lose our voice altogether.

Worlds End Studios case study

Problem

Worlds End Studios relied on an **unsupported legacy PBX** that was costly to maintain and limited future IT upgrades. Its unique receptionist service, answering calls for more than 100 client businesses, **required complex multi-tenant call handling** and a resilient platform to support future growth and business continuity.



Unsupported
legacy PBX



High maintenance
costs



Complex multi
tenant call routing



Limited
scalability



Risk to business
continuity



Delaying wider IT
modernisation

Objective

Modernise the studio's communications platform without disrupting the personalised service provided to its tenants. The new solution needed to **support complex call routing, improve resilience, enable future digital services** and provide a scalable platform capable of supporting continued business growth.



Solution

Britannic designed and delivered a **hosted cloud telephony** solution **integrated with a specialist receptionist console** to support Worlds End Studios' unique multi-tenant environment. The solution modernised communications while preserving **personalised call handling**, enabling seamless integration with future IT upgrades, enhanced resilience, flexible scaling and access to the latest digital communication services.

Results

A modern cloud communications platform that supports business continuity and enhanced customer service. Their clients get a **more resilience, modern, futureproofed telephony** platform.

100+

client businesses managed seamlessly by staff

24/7

business continuity built in

About Britannic

Britannic partnered with Worlds End Studios to deliver a **resilient cloud communications** platform for its unique multi tenant environment, combining **technical consultancy, project management and specialist integration** expertise.

Talk to the solutions people.

Britannic Technologies is a UK-based systems integrator, technology innovator, managed services provider and outcome-focused transformation partner, trusted by organisations across the public and private sectors.

With more than 40 years of experience, Britannic designs, integrates, delivers and manages communications, customer experience, AI, networking and cyber security solutions that connect people, processes and data. Through a consultative, outcome-led approach, Britannic helps organisations improve customer experience, increase operational efficiency, strengthen resilience and accelerate digital transformation.

Through its UK-hosted communications platforms, managed services expertise and proprietary NetX technology, Britannic enables organisations to modernise operations while maintaining security, resilience, compliance and operational control required for business-critical environments.

Supporting public cloud, private cloud and hybrid deployment models, Britannic provides the flexibility and operational support organisations need to achieve their strategic objectives.

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