

## Shifting roles of public relations professionals in artificial intelligence technology era: Case study of XY PR and digital agency

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### Abstract

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The Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has changed the way public relations professionals conduct research, build relationships with the public and personalize messages, one of which is at the PR and Digital XY agency. Artificial intelligence is not only a tool but also a technology that drives a shift in the role of Public Relations professionals in the communications industry. This study aims to analyze the shift in the role of public relations professionals in dealing with the development of artificial intelligence technology in the public relations profession. The theory used is technological determinism and the role of public relations. The method used in this study is a case study with data collection techniques in the form of interviews and literature studies. The results of the study show that in the era of artificial intelligence, there has been a shift in the role of public relations professionals from the four conventional PR roles to the role of gatekeepers and validators. PR is required to have digital communication competencies and ethical behavioral principles in using artificial intelligence technology.

## Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence technology is currently impacting the performance of practitioners in the communications industry. Several communications agencies are adopting AI as a tool to speed up task completion. In the public relations industry, AI is also being used to help practitioners plan, implement, and evaluate communication strategies. The role of PR is becoming more complex as AI technology transforms traditional roles into more modern ones. Public Relations has evolved to adapt its practices to meet the needs of users (Permatasari et al., 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) is assuming an increasingly significant role in public relations. Public relations practitioners should be aware that much of their work is aided by this technology and must be able to adapt quickly (Suciati et al., 2021). The adoption of new digital communication tools offers public relations practitioners an unprecedented opportunity to reinvent themselves in order to strengthen relationships, build customer satisfaction, effectively monitor the environment, and improve communication (Blankson & Anani-Bossman, 2023).

AI technology enhances the efficiency and expedience of public relations activities, encompassing technical tasks such as drafting copywriting and spokesperson scripts, as well as conducting social media monitoring and public perception research through online media. AI is recognized as one of the essential technologies required to fulfill public relations duties and responsibilities. With the incorporation of AI, public relations (PR) becomes more efficient and adaptable in confronting continuously evolving communication challenges. With AI, PR professionals can save time spent on mundane activities like creating media lists, scheduling meetings and sending follow-up emails (Panda et al, 2019). In practical terms, public relations as a managerial function aims to maintain positive relationships between management and internal employees, as well as external stakeholders such as consumers, the community, or government entities. The robust relationships established by PR practitioners are highly advantageous for organizations in achieving their objectives, including the enhancement of brand image to foster greater public trust and loyalty. It is incontrovertible that the role of PR practitioners is vital for corporations; this is evidenced by their capacity to enable companies to cultivate strong relationships with both internal and external publics.

Through the theory of technological determinism, McLuhan emphasized that the patterns of human life, especially aspects of social interaction between them, are determined by the development and type of technology mastered by the society in question (Saefudin, 2008). This theoretical framework facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the shifting role of public relations in AI era. Although artificial intelligence (AI) offers considerable convenience and speed for conducting research and professional communication in the field of public relations, some challenges such as concerns about invalid data circulating in the digital world, this data will later be processed by AI so it must be ensured that the processed data is accurate and relevant to produce clear and appropriate insights. However, not all organizations have access to complete or well-structured data sets. Furthermore, issues related to data privacy and security must be carefully managed. Extensive data collection for AI analysis can raise significant privacy concerns, which, if inadequately addressed, may result in reputational damage to the organization.

While artificial intelligence (AI) can automate various communication needs, the continued implementation of this technology requires a comprehensive technical role and the ability to integrate AI tools into the communication process. Public relations professionals who lack expertise in advanced technology applications will struggle to adapt to these developments. Therefore, organizations are recommended to prepare their human resources by upskilling their public relations personnel, thereby ensuring they can capitalize on the benefits of AI while preserving the essential human element crucial for effective public engagement. The habitus of PR professionals is defined by a relentless focus on optimism and the future (Bourne, 2019).

One of the main gaps in the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in public relations (PR) research and communication is the limitations in access and the quality of data used for analysis, meanwhile PR using AI for scanning and monitoring the organization's external environment, protecting the organization, processing information coming in from outside the organization, and gathering, distributing, and selecting the latest information flow then becomes information analysis (Gloria, 2018). Many organizations, especially smaller or newly developed ones, face difficulties in collecting sufficient data to effectively train AI systems (Jeong & Park, 2023). Without accurate and relevant data, AI cannot deliver optimal results in analyzing audience trends, public sentiment, or message effectiveness. Furthermore, data obtained from various sources is often unreliable, unstructured, or scattered, making it difficult to achieve the objectivity desired by PR practitioners. This creates a gap between the potential uses of AI and the reality of its application in PR. Organizations that cannot access or

utilize data effectively will face challenges in maximizing the use of this technology. Whereas, based on previous studies, 45% of respondents agreed that media monitoring in the context of social listening is the second-ranked job that will be replaced by big data technology and AI (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). AI helps in all aspects, especially in Public Relations & marketing the growth of the industry is found to be high compared with the non-AI industry (Alawaad, 2021). AI's reliable analyzes increase the role of innovative and strategic business practices in creating new competitive advantage (Gouda et al., 2020).

XY PR and Digital Agency is a communications firm situated in South Jakarta that employs artificial intelligence technology as an auxiliary instrument for its professionals. The agency provides services such as reputation management, media relations, digital strategy, and event coordination. Staff members leverage AI for research and copywriting; however, several challenges persist: practitioners tend to oversimplify their tasks, face tight deadlines, and consequently, managers often lack sufficient time to review the generated content before immediate uploading. The explanation of these issues indicates a shift in the role of Public Relations (PR) prior to and following the adoption of AI technology. Practitioner roles play a central role in the overall Excellence of communication departments and organizations (Grunig et al, 2002). Special attention must be given to PR practitioners currently utilizing AI technology to ensure that their roles can adapt to changing conditions while maintaining the importance of human actors in executing strategic communication.

## Method

This research employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach to explore the roles of Public Relations professionals in facing the development of artificial intelligence technology in the communication industry, particularly at the XY PR and Digital agency. This approach was chosen because it can deeply explore the dynamics and meanings of the PR role amidst the complex and contextual ongoing digital transformation. The case study design was chosen because it provides flexibility in exploring real phenomena currently occurring in the field, and how PR practitioners adapt to the implementation of AI in their daily work. This case study is exploratory, focusing on understanding the context, processes, and AI technology usage in public relations practice. The research was conducted at the XY PR and Digital Agency, which is known as one of the agencies that have implemented artificial intelligence technology in public communication and public relations services. The informants in this study consisted of PR practitioners directly involved in the planning and implementation of AI-based programs and experts in the field of Public Relations with doctoral education levels. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, conducted with 3 key informants holding positions as founder (DST), senior PR (SAP), and public relations staff (RA) from the XY PR and Digital Agency, and two experts from the Public Relations field (DN & R). The interviews were semi-structured, with a question guide developed based on the theory of technological determinism and the PR role theory.

Table 1. Informant Profiles

Code	Name	Position	Education Level
P1	DST	Founder of the Agency	Bachelor Degree
P2	SAP	Senior Public Relations	Bachelor Degree

Code	Name	Position	Education Level
P3	RA	PR Staff	Bachelor Degree
P4	DN	PR Expert	Doctoral
P5	R	PR Expert	Doctoral

The focus of this research analysis is the role of PR (as a communication technician, communication facilitator, problem-solving facilitator, and expert prescriber) before and after the era of AI adoption, as well as how ethics, validation, and control over technology are practiced by PR professionals. To maintain data validity, source triangulation and theory triangulation techniques were used. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with documents and literature. Meanwhile, theory triangulation was conducted by linking empirical findings with two main theories: technological determinism and PR role theory.

## Results and Discussion

This study examines the shift in the role of public relations before and after the AI era. The study was conducted at XY PR and Digital Agency located in South Jakarta. Three informants are PR practitioners from XY PR and Digital Agency and two informants are public relations experts who have been in the PR field for more than 10 years. This role shift is seen from two theories, namely the role of public relations and technological determinism. In public relations practice at XY, AI is a tool that helps practitioners in carrying out their tasks. Scholars and professionals alike are still largely focused on the impacts that AI is having on public relations practice, in helping communicators, for example, undertake more effective media monitoring and schedule more targeted social media posts (Swiatek and Galloway, 2022). The illustration of the shifting roles of public relations is depicted in the table below:

Table 2. Roles of Public Relations (Researcher, 2025)

Roles	PR Before AI Era	PR After AI Era
Expert Prescriber	An expert prescriber is a public relations role that has the authority to advise an organization on what it should do. Expert advisors define problems, develop programs, and are responsible for their implementation.	The role of expert prescriber in the AI era is not only to provide advice for strategic communication but also to advise companies to maintain message quality when using AI.
Communication Facilitator	A communication facilitator is a public relations that serve as liaisons, interpreters and mediators between an organization and its public.	The role of communication facilitator in AI era doing some social listening, sentiment analysis, and real-time issue monitoring, interpreting the results and developing appropriate responses still requires human intervention



Roles	PR Before AI Era	PR After AI Era
Problem Solving Facilitator	The role of a problem-solving facilitator in PR is to act as a problem solver in the organization, this role is involved in designing communication strategies.	In the AI era, PR plays a role as a problem-solving facilitator, carrying out diagnostic phases such as detecting potential crises through analyzing social media trends or predicting the impact of a particular problem.
Communication Technician	The role of a communication technician makes a PR professional act as a technician who only provides communication technique services.	The role of communication technicians in the AI era is changing into content generation, automated visual editors and content scheduling.

### The Roles of Conventional Public Relations in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

The changes instigated by the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) technology have prompted a transformation in public relations (PR) roles. Traditional PR practices, historically founded on intuition, experience, and interpersonal skills, are now required to evolve to accommodate technology that facilitates automated data analysis, personalized communication, and real-time media surveillance. Nevertheless, these developments are shifting conventional PR roles and instead fostering an adaptation and transition within the profession in accordance with technological progress. In the PR industry, AI technology is a driving factor in changing the habits of PR professionals. Broader participation from underrepresented stakeholders is needed to responsibly shape AI integration in public relations and media (Kaleel & Alomari, 2024). In carrying out their duties, PR practitioners are currently accustomed to using AI as stated by P1 (Founder of XY), the following:

*“Most employees here know how to use AI. However, those with deeper knowledge are PR practitioners, whose job involves writing, research, and so on, using AI”*

This is reinforced by the results of an interview with P2 (Senior PR):

*“If I could quantify it, for me personally, it can save up to 60% of my time because I don’t have to think as much, but rather paraphrase and explore more after seeing AI’s answers”.*

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has had a significant impact on public relations practices. AI no longer functions merely as an auxiliary tool but also as a force that systematically influences the work structure and roles of public relations professionals. Within the framework of McLuhan’s (1964) technological determinism theory, as explained by Saefudin (2008), explain how technology, especially media, determines how individuals in society think about things, feel things, and carry out certain actions. Meanwhile, the Public Relations role theory identifies four main roles of PR practitioners that are conventional yet relevant to be reanalyzed in the context of current technology: communication technician, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and expert prescriber (Broom & Sha, 2013). Below is an explanation of how each of these roles has shifted in the context of AI utilization at XY PR and Digital Agency:

As a PR communications technician, PR have the task of handling technical matters such as content creation, media relations, a graphic designer, or a social media specialist. The PR professional is primarily responsible for creating communication materials such as brochures, videotapes, newsletters, and press releases. He administers communication programs but is not involved in the decision-making that leads to the program's creation (Mohamed & Bayraktar, 2022). Communication technicians are essential to carry out most of the day-to-day communication activities of public relations departments, and many practitioners play both manager and technician roles (Grunig, et al, 2002). In conventional practice, communication technicians are responsible for writing press releases, creating media content, and carrying out other technical communication activities. However, in the AI era, many of these functions have been automated. Tools such as automated content generation, AI copywriting tools can now generate messages efficiently and quickly. A communication technician is no longer just creating messages, but also editing, filtering, and ensuring the accuracy, ethics, and relevance of AI-generated content as explained by P1:

*"AI is bringing significant changes here, from content generation and automated visual editing to content scheduling. At XY, we utilize AI to create content drafts or initial design concepts, but the final touches, such as quality control, adjusting tone of voice, brand strategy, and matters related to cultural norms, remain human".*

Thus, the role of technicians is not lost, but rather shifts from manual production to editorial and quality control functions based on communication ethics. Communication technicians utilize AI to create content drafts or initial designs, while maintaining human control.

As a communication facilitator, PR is bridging organizations and the public. The task of the communication facilitator is to bridge public feedback with the internal team and client management. In the conventional communication facilitator, PR is tasked with building two-way communication channels between the organization and the public. In the context of AI, this task has changed into social listening, sentiment analysis, and real-time issue monitoring while ensuring that the technology remains human, empathetic, and responsive to the audience's needs. A notable advantage of AI PR is its ability to process extensive data rapidly and accurately (Vita et al, 2023). The role of a communication facilitator in the AI era extends beyond merely serving as a conduit to stakeholders; It also involves ensuring that the information conveyed via AI technology is appropriate, reliable, and accurate before dissemination to the public. This role incorporates a gatekeeping function, whereby public relations must ensure that the information has been properly vetted, fulfilling its role in accordance with the objectives of the organization's communication strategy, as P1 (founder of XY) stated:

*"With AI, we can conduct social listening, sentiment analysis, and real-time issue monitoring, enabling us to convey public opinion more quickly and accurately. However, interpreting the results and formulating appropriate responses still requires human intervention, as it requires empathy and an understanding of social context. They are also tasked with bridging the gap between AI analytics results and public feedback, creating a dialogue that remains authentic even though it originates from a digital process".*

As a problem-solving facilitator, public relations (PR) assists organizations in understanding the nature of issues and developing appropriate communication strategies to resolve them. In the era of artificial intelligence, this role is enhanced by activities such as problem definition and research, which may involve analyzing social media trends or predicting the potential impact of issues on stakeholders. Nonetheless, PR remains responsible for decision-making when AI tools support research efforts, as they possess

a nuanced understanding of the organization's identity, brand values, and sensitivity to various matters. P4 (PR Expert) stated:

*"When we are having a discussion, AI can record it, then transcribe it into text and even create a summary. This is very helpful."*

As an expert prescriber, Public Relations (PR) not only addresses the core issue but also provides strategic counsel regarding PR initiatives. PR occupies a strategic role in research, planning and delivering communication recommendations to organizational leaders or clients. If the internal and external publics are broad and has complicated problems and previously undetected, expert prescriber's role is needed (Ani et al, 2017). In the context of artificial intelligence (AI), there is a role for expert advisors who not only provide advice so that organizations take the actions that should be taken but also provide advice that the use of AI in organizations must still maintain the quality of the message conveyed to the public, including recommending ethical limits on the use of AI in organizations. This role assumes increasing significance, as organizational leaders require guidance not only on messaging but also on the ethical, effective, and relevant application of technologies. P1 (founder of XY) stated:

*"AI strengthens this role through predictive analytics, trend mapping, and scenario simulations, enabling more evidence-based recommendations. However, at XY, we emphasize that AI is merely a co-pilot, as the final decision still relies on a consultant's professional intuition, shaped by years of experience. This experience yields integrity and a deep understanding of the issue's context".*

In this role, public relations practitioners employ research skills, analyze trends, and simulate scenarios related to organizational conditions. Through the utilization of artificial intelligence technology, public relations retains final decision-making authority based on intuition cultivated through experience. The role of expert advisor in the era of artificial intelligence necessitates integrity and a comprehensive understanding of current issues.

## **The Roles of Gatekeeper and Validator in the Era of Artificial Intelligence**

In addition to the four conventional roles that PR practitioners had before the AI era, new roles are emerging for PR practitioners. Several new activities in the PR profession have shifted conventional roles due to the use of AI-based devices for media monitoring, public sentiment analysis, message personalization based on data segmentation, and even automated content creation. These tasks previously required a lot of time and human effort, but can now be done more efficiently. However, this efficiency also brings new challenges, namely ensuring that AI results remain ethical, accurate, and aligned with responsible communication values. As the research results that the technology of big data and artificial intelligence that will revolutionize the world of communication and public relations, the human aspect is still needed (Arief & Gustomo, 2020), Artificial Intelligence will increasingly assist public relations practitioners, especially on mundane and administration-based tasks (Turksoy, 2022).

The study found two new roles that have emerged in the PR profession in the AI era: a gatekeeper and a validator. As a gatekeeper, PR plays a role in filtering and controlling information and content generated by AI before it is delivered to the public. This role is important to prevent the spread of biased, inaccurate, or unethical information. Meanwhile, the role of a validator emphasizes that PR professionals must be able to critically assess the validity of AI data and interpretations when using AI in any PR activities. PR practitioners must validate the data generated by AI to ensure it is accurate and reliable. As carried out

by PR practitioners at XY PR and Digital Agency, AI results are validated and confirmed together with senior PR as the party conducting the validation, as conveyed by P2 (senior PR) as follows:

*"Confirmation is carried out by DST as CEO of XY after approval from various division chiefs from the production team, whether the quantity and quality of production are appropriate, the AE team whether it is in accordance with the client's targets & desires, the finance team agrees on the payment mechanism."*

Thus, PR practitioners act as a bridge between technology and social values that are the foundation of public relations. This role is very important because AI does not have moral capabilities and value judgments, this remains the responsibility of humans as PR professionals. This study also showed that PR professional competencies are now becoming increasingly complex. Not only technical skills, but also required to have digital literacy, the ability to understand data analysis, and ethical awareness in the use of technology.

AI technology is indeed capable of analyzing sentiment and making predictions based on data, but interpreting these results still requires contextual understanding, organizational values, and ethical sensitivity that only PR practitioners can provide. As gatekeepers, PR practitioners filter AI results to ensure they remain ethical, meaningful, and do not harm the organization's reputation before being delivered to the public. As validators, PR practitioners ensure that AI content still considers the social and cultural aspects of the audience. Thus, the conventional role of PR is shifting and expanding its functions. Practitioners now not only convey messages but also assess the appropriateness of messages formulated by AI systems. This study shows that although AI offers efficiency, control and effectiveness in communication remain in the hands of humans, P4 (PR Expert) stated:

*"PR also has a role in educating organizations and the public that AI is just a machine. The communication process is based on the spirit of humanity. Humans are the main actors. All communication channels and materials must remain steadfast in the PR declaration of principles: truth and trust, the two foundations of building mutual understanding and relationships. Thus, these are the essential socio-cultural factors that determine the humanity of individuals and organizations".*

Currently, the utilization of artificial intelligence in public relations tasks is limited to monitoring and analysis of social media and activities on the internet that provide a picture of the pattern of human activity on social media and the internet, so that it can be a basis for decision-making for public relations practitioners (Munandar & Irwansyah, 2020).

AI technology in assisting PR work in XY PR and Digital Agency is semi-autonomous, such as through automated scheduling, research, copywriting, and AI-based press release writing. This reflects the autonomous nature of technology within determinism. The message lies not only in the communication content, but also in the technology that delivers it. AI as a communication medium in PR has an impact, determining how meaning is formed and received by the public. This means that the use of AI is shifting the dynamics of communication itself. This study highlights that the gatekeeper function is now expanding in AI-human systems, where algorithms influence content selection based on engagement metrics and message personalization, making the role of human PR people crucial in preventing bias and misinformation. In addition to shaping public relations task-competence habits and competencies, artificial intelligence (AI) technology also facilitates the adaptation process of the technology itself. These findings substantiate the assertion that public relations validators play a role in evaluating the validity of AI data and outputs. This constitutes a strategic response to technological advancements and illustrates that



public relations professionals are not merely passively adapting to the integration of AI within the communications industry but are proactively engaging with it.

### **Determinism of Artificial Intelligence Technology in the Public Relations Profession**

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought profound disruption across sectors, including the field of PR. In public relations practice, AI has now become a technology that influences all aspects of professional work, from audience research and message development to campaign evaluation. Technologies such as predictive analytics, chatbots, automated media monitoring, and machine-generated content have transformed traditional PR methods, which were once highly reliant on intuition, interpersonal skills, and manual processes. From a technological determinism perspective, as AI becomes the primary medium in the communication process, the PR work structure and roles within it are changing. PR practitioners are no longer simply message transmitters, but are now required to manage data-driven systems and algorithms that determine what messages are delivered, when, to whom, and in what format. The deterministic integration of AI into PR has triggered a shift in professional roles. The role of communications technicians, once responsible for writing press releases and managing media relations, has shifted to include content creation and validation. AI is no longer just a tool, but rather an aspect that impacts PR work. For example, media monitoring, previously performed manually, is now being replaced by AI systems that can scan many of news stories and social media posts in second, as P1 (founder of XY) explained:

*"At the time, we were simultaneously handling approximately 30 clients, including MSMEs, with due dates almost simultaneously. This was impossible to solve with conventional methods. Simultaneously, I also learned how AI works. I'd actually known about the AI for a long time. I studied AI, distributed it to my staff, and even had them learn it themselves".*

PR professionals are thus required not only to observe but also to strategically and ethically interpret these technological outputs. As noted in this study, PR professionals now act as gatekeepers and validators. Technological determinism also brings ethical challenges. The key is how responsibly we use a powerful technology in the greater services of mankind and beyond. Some the ethical issues involving AI is worth discussing, having ethical AI is key to sustainable business enterprise and decision making (Gouda et.al, 2020). While AI can automate communication functions, it can also introduce algorithmic bias, misinformation, and privacy violations if not critically monitored. Therefore, PR practitioners must uphold humanistic values in AI-assisted communication processes like P5 (PR Expert) stated:

*"It's definitely influential. Communication technology inevitably influences practitioners in communicating, as the principle of technological determinism dictates. PR is communication management, and communication will be effective if it's directed at the right audience for the message. Nowadays, audiences are AI-minded, so inevitably, PR must also use AI. However, it's important to remember that technology is just a machine; the actors are still human. Ethical implications must still be considered."*

AI is impacting public relations and not only changing methods and practices, but also habits, required competencies, and ethical frameworks. As a result, PR professionals view AI not merely as an instrument but as a technology that creates increasing dependency. Society and a government that is only partially capable of regulation are inferior to the AI companies due to their power, at the same time, AI applications satisfy people's basic needs and are, therefore, gaining acceptance (Winkel, 2024). AI is not only automating tasks but is structurally changing the habits of the PR profession, shifting the role of PR to a function of validating

and evaluating algorithmic output. Furthermore, the technological determinism framework demonstrates how AI is reshaping the PR work system. AI is becoming an important tool in developing communication strategies. These findings reinforce that PR at PR agencies and Digital XY has shifted to the role of gatekeeper and validator, demanding greater digital literacy, analytical competence, and ethical awareness. The ethical and legal implications of using big data and AI for public relations campaigns can be even more complex due to varying levels of technological development and regulatory infrastructure (James, 2024)

At XY PR and Digital Agency, AI technology is transforming the way PR practitioners work and their habits, in line with theory of technological determinism. AI ethics is a multifaceted problem that must now include further examination of promotional ethics, because promotional culture is an integral part of the giant knowledge apparatus constructing value in AI (Bourne, 2024). The gatekeeper role aims to ensure the accountability of AI output, filter out bias, and ensure the quality of information before it is disseminated to the public. The validator role validates and ensures the integrity and accuracy of AI content before it is used for PR tasks. Enhancing public digital literacy is crucial to mitigate the impact of algorithmically curated content (Fahrisky & Rahmawati, 2025). Digital communication competencies and ethical principles are necessary to ensure that the use of AI does not harm PR practitioners or organizations.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that PR practitioners at XY PR and Digital Agency have four conventional roles: as a communication technician, a communication facilitator, a problem-solving facilitator, and an expert prescriber. PR practitioners at the XY PR and Digital agency have also played other roles since entering the AI era, namely, validator and gatekeeper. As a validator, PR must be capable of assessing the validity of AI data and interpretations when utilizing AI in any public relations activities to ensure their accuracy and reliability. As a gatekeeper, PR plays a role in filtering and controlling information and content generated by AI before it is delivered to the public. The roles of gatekeeper and validator are played to ensure that AI is used ethically and strategically in the PR work process. The roles are crucial to prevent the spread of biased, inaccurate, or unethical information. As AI systems increasingly influence personalized messaging, media monitoring, and predictive analytics, PR practitioners must possess digital communication competencies and ethical behavioral principles to ensure that communications initiatives are effective, responsible, and human-centered.

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