

AI FOR PR CONFERENCE 2026

LinkedIn® Response Report

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Introduction

The inaugural AI for PR Conference brought together almost 400 communications professionals in London on 18 June 2026 to explore one of the defining issues facing the communications profession.

Inspired by the publication of AI for Public Relations by Stephen Waddington and Ben Verinder, the conference set out to move beyond discussions about AI tools and instead examine what artificial intelligence means for leadership, governance, creativity, reputation, measurement and the future role of communications professionals.

The response extended far beyond the conference itself.

In the days that followed, LinkedIn became filled with reflections from delegates, speakers, sponsors and

partners. Hundreds of comments, photographs and long-form posts explored the ideas raised during the day, shared practical takeaways and debated what AI means for the future of public relations.

This report analyses those public conversations.

Rather than summarising every presentation, it looks at the sessions and ideas delegates themselves chose to discuss afterwards. Together they provide a fascinating picture of what resonated most strongly and why the conversation continued long after delegates had left the venue.

Executive Summary

The LinkedIn response to the inaugural AI for PR Conference was overwhelmingly positive.

Delegates consistently described it as one of the strongest communications conferences they had attended, praising not only the quality of the speakers but also the balance between strategic thinking and practical implementation.

Across dozens of substantial LinkedIn posts and hundreds of comments, several themes emerged repeatedly.

Rather than focusing on AI tools, delegates concentrated on leadership, governance, reputation, ethics and the changing role of communications professionals.

There was broad agreement that AI represents one of the biggest strategic opportunities the communications

profession has seen for many years—but only if practitioners embrace advisory roles rather than limiting themselves to operational implementation.

Many also commented on the conference's balance. Delegates appreciated that sessions neither promoted AI uncritically nor focused solely on risks. Instead, discussions acknowledged both the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany rapid technological change.

Perhaps most significantly, the conversation did not end with the conference. Many delegates described the event as the beginning of an ongoing industry discussion rather than a one-day conference.

Overall Response

Across LinkedIn, several descriptions appeared repeatedly.

Delegates referred to the conference as:

- “The best communications conference I’ve attended.”
- “One of the most valuable industry events.”
- “Thought-provoking from start to finish.”
- “Packed with practical insight.”
- “A brilliant balance between strategy and implementation.”
- “Exactly the conversation our profession needs.”

Many experienced practitioners commented that they had attended communications conferences for decades but could not remember another event generating so much discussion afterwards.

Numerous posts also highlighted the quality of debate.

Rather than presenting AI as either an existential threat or an inevitable solution, delegates appreciated hearing differing viewpoints from practitioners, academics, journalists, agencies and in-house communications leaders.

Conference Insights

AI and Public Relations: Opportunity or Threat?

The conference opened by asking perhaps the most fundamental question facing communications today: is AI an opportunity that elevates public relations, or a threat that diminishes it?

This framing established the tone for the rest of the day.

Rather than debating individual technologies, discussion immediately focused on the future role of communications professionals and the strategic position of the function within organisations.

Many delegates later reflected that AI should no longer be viewed as a technology project but as a leadership challenge requiring communications expertise.

Several posts returned to this theme throughout the week, arguing that the profession has an opportunity to become a far more influential strategic adviser.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- AI represents an opportunity rather than simply a threat
- Communications should lead organisational AI adoption
- Strategic advisory work becomes increasingly valuable

The AMEC GEO Principles: Measuring Reputation in the AI Search Era

James Crawford introduced delegates to the newly launched AMEC GEO Principles, providing one of the first structured approaches to measuring communications performance within generative AI search.

Although relatively few LinkedIn posts referred directly to the session, its influence appeared throughout later discussion.

Concepts including AI visibility, Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO), reputation measurement and earned media were among the most frequently discussed topics after the conference.

Delegates also echoed Crawford's warning that the profession must avoid replacing one flawed metric with another, ensuring that AI measurement remains focused on meaningful outcomes rather than creating a “new AVE”.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- GEO is becoming a core communications discipline.
- AI visibility requires new measurement frameworks.
- Reputation matters more than rankings.
- Meaningful measurement remains essential.

Risks and the Professional Advisory Opportunity

This panel generated some of the strongest discussion of the day.

Farzana Baduel's suggestion that AI could usher in a "golden age for PR" appeared repeatedly across LinkedIn, while Professor Anne Gregory's challenge to phrases such as "human in the loop" and "data-led decision making" was quoted by numerous delegates.

Delegates consistently highlighted governance, ethics, organisational trust and leadership responsibility.

Many concluded that AI governance belongs within communications because communicators uniquely understand organisational culture, stakeholder expectations and reputation.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- Governance is becoming a communications discipline.
- Human judgement remains central.
- AI creates new advisory opportunities.
- Ethics should be designed in, not added later.

A Framework for Future Work: Scaling Enterprise AI

Allison Spray's presentation focused on moving beyond experimentation towards organisation-wide adoption.

One question appeared repeatedly in delegate reflections:

“What is your AI people strategy?”

Many LinkedIn posts referenced the gap between AI ambition and successful implementation.

Delegates noted that organisations often invest heavily in technology while paying far less attention to adoption, capability development and organisational confidence.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- AI implementation is fundamentally a people challenge.
- Skills matter more than technology alone.
- Confidence remains a significant barrier.

AI in Action: Governance, Implementation and Real-World Lessons

Amy Mollett, Serena Mitchell and Tom Kirkup explored practical AI implementation within organisations.

While this session generated fewer individual LinkedIn posts than others, delegates frequently referred back to the importance of practical governance, usable AI policies and implementation frameworks that people actually follow.

Policy Clinic

The interactive Policy Clinic encouraged delegates to submit their own organisational dilemmas for discussion.

Although discussed less frequently online, attendees who mentioned the session appreciated its practical focus and willingness to tackle real-world organisational challenges rather than hypothetical scenarios.

The Case for Being Human

Chris Stokel-Walker's presentation proved to be one of the most widely discussed sessions of the conference.

His explanation of how journalists increasingly use AI to manage overwhelming volumes of incoming pitches fascinated delegates.

However, his central message surprised many.

Rather than using AI to send more pitches, communicators should use AI to send fewer, better targeted pitches.

That observation appeared repeatedly across LinkedIn.

Many delegates described this as one of the most immediately practical sessions of the day.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- Personalisation matters more than automation.
- AI should improve quality, not quantity.
- Human relationships remain critical.

Using AI Within Content Creation

The content creation panel challenged one of the most common assumptions surrounding AI: that it automatically saves time.

Several speakers argued that producing genuinely high-quality AI-assisted content still requires considerable editorial judgement, refinement and strategic thinking.

Many delegates repeated David Sheldrick's observation that using AI well is a craft requiring continual development.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- AI supports creativity rather than replacing it.
- Prompting is a professional skill.
- Human editorial judgement remains essential.

Marketing to Machines

Few sessions generated as much discussion afterwards as Jonny Bentwood's presentation.

Across LinkedIn, one message appeared repeatedly:

"There's a new gatekeeper—and it's a machine."

Delegates reflected extensively on AI visibility, Generative Engine Optimisation, structured content, Reddit, answer-first publishing and earned media's growing influence over AI recommendations.

Many described the presentation as fundamentally changing how they think about public relations.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- Communications now targets both people and machines.
- GEO is becoming commercially important.
- Earned media is increasingly valuable.
- AI visibility should become a strategic priority.

Making Sense of the Technology and Vendor Landscape

Andrew Bruce Smith and Will Julian-Vicary provided practical guidance on navigating an increasingly crowded AI marketplace.

Delegates highlighted the importance of understanding token economics, evaluating vendors carefully and matching AI models to specific tasks rather than assuming one solution fits every requirement.

Planning and Measurement

Paul Hender explored how AI is transforming communications planning and evaluation.

Posts discussing the session consistently focused on moving beyond outputs towards meaningful outcomes.

Several delegates also highlighted the need for structured communications data if AI-powered measurement is to become genuinely useful.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- Measure business impact rather than activity.
- Data quality underpins AI effectiveness.
- Communications measurement continues to evolve.

Data Malarkey Live

Sam Knowles' live recording with Pete Markey provided an engaging discussion around branding, trust and AI.

Posts following the session emphasised the continued importance of relevance, authenticity and human experience alongside technological change.

AI Fight Club

The conference concluded with its most distinctive session.

What could easily have become a novelty instead became one of the defining moments of the day.

LinkedIn was filled with photographs of boxing robes, ring walks and animated debate, but beneath the theatre delegates repeatedly praised the quality of the arguments.

Many described it as the perfect conference finale.

Speakers later reflected that debating complex issues within ninety-second rounds forced them to sharpen their thinking in ways traditional panel discussions rarely achieve.

Themes emerging on LinkedIn

- Debate encourages clarity.
- Entertainment and substance can coexist.
- AI raises legitimate differences of opinion.
- The session became one of the conference's defining memories.

The Future We Choose

The closing session returned to perhaps the day's most important message.

Communications professionals who thrive will be those who embrace strategic leadership, ethical judgement and uniquely human capabilities.

One phrase appeared repeatedly throughout the LinkedIn discussion:

"This is not an IT project. This is a people project."

For many delegates, that became the defining message of the conference.

Ten Themes That Defined the Conversation

Looking across all LinkedIn activity, ten themes consistently emerged.

1. AI is creating new leadership opportunities for communications professionals.
2. Human judgement is becoming more valuable rather than less.
3. Governance, ethics and trust should become communications responsibilities.
4. AI visibility and GEO represent a major new frontier.
5. Earned media continues to grow in importance.
6. AI should improve quality rather than simply increase output.
7. Communications measurement must evolve beyond activity metrics.
8. Successful AI adoption depends on people, not technology alone.
9. Agency business models and commercial structures will need to change.
10. The profession is only at the beginning of understanding AI's long-term implications.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the LinkedIn response was not simply its positivity, but its substance.

Delegates rarely discussed individual tools or demonstrations. Instead, they reflected on leadership, governance, reputation, ethics, organisational change and the future direction of the communications profession.

That suggests the conference succeeded in achieving something more significant than delivering a day of presentations.

It started a conversation.

Judging by the depth and breadth of discussion that continued across LinkedIn in the days that followed, that conversation is only just beginning.

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