Developing Core Communication Skills in an AI-Dominated World: Staying 'Old School'

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Authors
Carol Wright, Ed.D., Associate Professor and Chair, Business Communication & Legal Studies Department, Stephen F. Austin State University
cwright@sfasu.edu

Kayla Sapkota, **Ed.D.,** Associate Professor, Department of Business, Arkansas State University at Beebe
knsapkota@asub.edu

Abstract

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has been a popular topic in education since the introduction of ChatGPT in 2022, and many research articles have been published addressing its use. This exploratory, mixed-method study of business communication instructors reports that many instructors are finding ways to use AI in their classes, and there are mixed beliefs about its impact on students' writing abilities. Practical suggestions for using technology are provided.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), technology, business communication, soft skills, core skills

Jenny, a tech-savvy instructor, was eager to introduce her college students to ChatGPT for their class assignments. Artificial intelligence (AI) was a popular topic at the academic conference she attended, where she learned ideas of how to use it in the classroom. Her excitement grew as she announced, "Today, we're going to dive into AI with help from our friend, ChatGPT. This AI assistant will help us craft a persuasive email message."

Jenny projected ChatGPT onto the classroom screen and said, "Let's start our message by asking other students to join your fraternity. What would be an engaging opening sentence?" After a moment, students called out creative ideas. Jenny chose one and prompted ChatGPT to begin the letter. As the class continued with ChatGPT, they found that the AI's responses were formal and somewhat impersonal. They added personal anecdotes and questions to infuse the message with warmth and authenticity, but ChatGPT struggled to match their style. Despite their prompts, the AI's responses remained impersonal and still did not seem quite right. It used awkward phrases and did not follow a conversational writing style. Students were anxious to accept the messages as is because they felt the messages were acceptable, but Jenny encouraged her students to edit the message and make the needed adjustments. She emphasized the importance of editing the message to reflect their voices and sentiments. "Remember," she reminded them, "we have to work with ChatGPT to make it a valuable writing partner." Jenny knew this experience had taught them an important lesson: while technology could be a useful tool, it could not replace the human touch in crafting genuine and personalized communications. This story is a valuable reminder that even in the age of advanced AI, the human component remains an irreplaceable element in communication.

Integrating new technology, especially artificial intelligence, into teaching practices can be met with apprehension, particularly if the technology is changing rapidly like ChatGPT is. It is understood that today's new hires need the appropriate skillset to use the latest technologies effectively, and educators should be knowledgeable of their unique value and incorporate them into the curriculum. Numerous recent studies address this need to update the business communication curriculum (Cardon et al., 2023; Bieger & Kolmar, 2023; Getchell et al., 2022; Grassimi, 2023; Joglekar et al., 2022; McMurtrie, 2023).

Joglekar et al. (2022) identified a clear shift of businesses to digital communication, necessitating that business communication instructors update their courses to prepare students for the workforce. This shift in preparing students for the 21st century workforce was highlighted by Explorance (2023) as it urged educators to expose students to common tools and skill sets in today's workplace. Some of the skills mentioned include digital literacy, information management, adaptability, teamwork, and communication. Cardon et al. (2023) reminded educators that students already use such tools in their personal lives. Educators must aid students in extending this technological usage from personal to professional scenarios, a similar challenge to that of years past with social media usage (Sapkota & Vander Putten, 2018).

Technology is an essential component of business communication, and the proper use of it should be taught in our classes. Cardon et al. (2023) propose an AI Literacy model that includes application, accountability, authenticity, and agency. These factors include the need to

"personalize and tailor messages with [students'] own voice[s] and the unique needs and wants of their audiences" (p. 279), the capacity to identify misinformation, and the ability to maintain control of the message. Likewise, these factors comprise essential elements of core knowledge and skills development in business communication. At the same time, students' ability to use critical thinking is essential to implement the AI Literacy model (Cardon et al., 2023), and business communication instructors are uniquely positioned to teach and reinforce this skill.

Few instructors dispute the need to use technology; however, students must learn to strategically pair technology with the soft skills needed for career and personal success. Teaching interpersonal skills equips individuals with the tools they need to communicate effectively, build positive relationships, and succeed in their careers. With so much focus on integrating AI into the curriculum, we must continue to provide the basic components of what makes effective business communication, and this might well include emerging technology. Grassini (2023) suggested that educators attempt to “accept and integrate…technological tools into our educational setting, instead of trying to…suppress their growth” (p. 8). Those students who learn to effectively use the resources available to them might be better poised for future success.

Major business communication textbooks address instances when technology is not always the best option. Guffey and Loewy (2023) stated, "Communicating in person remains the most effective of all communication channels" (p. 339). Lehman et al. (2024) posited "that although there is a need for high technical skills in the workplace, there remains a significantly higher need for interpersonal and group communications skills applied in face-to-face settings" (p. 22). Cardon (2024) discussed the interpersonal communication process and how it greatly influences the quality of how we communicate, and how learning emotional intelligence can improve the process.

Cardon et al. (2023) provided a strong foundation for integrating AI in writing and idea/content generation in business communication, calling for business communication instructors to promote AI literacy in the curriculum. Our study accepts this call, but encourages that not all classes should abandon the basic building blocks of teaching what makes good communication. Our students need to understand how to create, adapt, and recognize effective communication. Our findings will explore the initial experiences of early adopters of emerging technology (with AI at the forefront) and provide other business communication faculty with advice on how to survive in this rapidly changing technological environment.

Literature Review

The literature review addresses the historical perspective on business communication curriculum and challenges in technology adoption in education.

Historical Perspective on Business Communication Curriculum

One of the objectives of the business communication course is to prepare students for the workplace by teaching them the communication skills to help them critically analyze a situation in various business situations (Russ, 2009). Historical studies of business communication courses show that the objectives of the courses have not changed a lot, and improving writing skills has been the focus (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Russ, 2009; Sharp & Brumberger, 2013; Wardrope, 2001; Sapkota & Vander Putten, 2018). An updated survey of the course shows that it still covers a variety of assignments including letters, memos, resumes, research reports, blogs, business proposals, and oral presentations. In fact, 60.5% of business communication instructors report their course includes comprehensive coverage of business writing, and 25.6% report a lot of coverage (Moshiri & Cardon, 2020). In addition, these same authors report that critical thinking is being taught along with writing. However, Cyphert et al. (2019) called for more focus on authentic activities students will likely experience in their careers. These activities include interpersonal skills and critical thinking to "effectively participate in a face-to-face or mediated meeting" (p. 182) and clearly summarize information, supporting the claim to continue teaching these basic skills in the curriculum.

Challenges in Technology Adoption in Education

Supporting this need, a study of business communication students in the U.S. and India by Joglekar et al. (2022) found that Gen Y and Gen Z students "general[ly] demonstrated both high frequency of use as well as high differentiation in their digital channel preferences and choices; however, high use alone does not indicate a strong sense of self-awareness or confidence in using such platforms to communicate authentic messages" (p. 150). This finding shows that current students, who are likely Gen Z, need guidance using technology.

Notable unease with implementing AI in the business classroom exist and could potentially impact employment in higher education. Cardon et al.'s (2023) study of business communication instructors' perceptions of AI found that 46.7% were nervous or anxious about using it in their courses, and some participants noted that they would likely retire before being required to include it. Like the private sector, the higher education environment is experiencing its "great resignation." A survey conducted by Inside Higher Ed (Flaherty, 2022) noted a slight reduction in the faculty population and higher incidences of faculty leaving their positions. One reason provided was burnout, which could be related to increasing faculty demands related to technology; further research might illuminate this. With the knowledge that higher education institutions may face faculty shortages, retaining quality instructors is an issue of concern. Faculty should not feel compelled to retire because they feel left behind concerning technology. This thought leads to the discussion of how faculty that may not be current on technology can still strive in this rapidly changing technological environment.

Conceptual Framework

Self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to effectively complete a task (Bandura, 1997). Part of building self-efficacy is through continuous experiences using this skill in context. Several studies have expanded on this in various contexts. A meta-analysis conducted by Bandura and Locke (2003) found that people "do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self-worth, and refrain from actions that bring self-censure" (p. 97). If students are confident in their ability, they will seek activities that use this skill. On the other hand, a lack of confidence makes the student less likely to apply for positions requiring these skills, ultimately limiting their career options. A positive view of one's skills during the job search may help students to better express their abilities to recruiters to earn better positions in the workplace (Petruzziello et al., 2021).

The business communication class can be used to build the communication self-efficacy needed to help these students succeed. Surveys of employers show that future employees need the ability to organize and express ideas clearly and concisely (Coffelt et al., 2019; Kohn, 2015) and convey the message clearly to employers. A study by Intelligent.com shows that 40% of business leaders do not believe recent graduates are prepared to enter the workforce, and most of these leaders attribute this in part to poor communication skills. (Wells, 2023). These statistics are likely not a surprise to today's educators, but they reinforce the value of core skills, such as writing and speaking, as well as soft skills, such as critical thinking, in the business communication curriculum.

To guide this research, the researchers acknowledge that technology plays an ever-present role in the education of the next generation of students; however, the core communication skills and soft skills remain relevant (Coffelt et al., 2019; Kohn, 2015.) Similarly, students need a strong sense of self-efficacy before they are able to evaluate the world around them, including technology (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Petruzziello et al., 2021). In this case, the students may not have the ability to understand whether work produced through AI is valuable; this creates a vital role for instructors to find ways to guide students in using this technology. If instructors are apprehensive about trying new technology, early adopters of technology can serve as mentors to effectively implement new technologies (Kopcha, 2012).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of business communication faculty on the impact of AI in teaching. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions.

1. How do business communication instructors perceive the impact of AI and other emerging technology tools in the business communication curriculum?
2. How do current business communication instructors view the need to develop business communication soft skills and core skills when using technology?

3. What advice can these "early adopters" of emerging technologies provide to others who may be more apprehensive about using the technology?

The survey responses collected answered these research questions and provided insight into future curriculum considerations.

Methodology

The research design was explorative in nature, involving an online survey and purposive sampling to study business communication instructors' perceptions and experiences regarding AI and other emerging technologies.

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online survey created in Qualtrics. This survey protocol was derived from the research questions, as well as elements of the social media technology acceptance model, as presented by Sapkota & Vander Putten (2018). The survey included multiple-choice and open-ended questions and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was ensured. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of one of the authors. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study to elicit data collection based on both a wholly representative and knowledgeable sample of the population (Gay et al., 2011). All current members of the Association for Business Communication (ABC) were sent an email from the national organization with a link to complete the survey. One of the authors also emailed ABC members in an attempt to increase the participation rate of the survey. A total of 2,823 email requests were sent, and 361 were returned as undeliverable. The link was also posted on the home page of the ABC website with other news items.

One hundred and ten surveys were begun, but only 80 surveys were completed in their entirety, resulting in a participation rate of 3.9%. We chose to include all survey responses despite their completeness because their responses still provide useful insight.

Results/Findings

In this analysis of the data, we isolated a series of questions from our survey to provide relevant descriptive statistics with which to frame our results. At the same time, we used Microsoft Excel to analyze responses to selected open-ended questions from the survey. We reported the results collectively and then filtered them to provide responses based on years of experience and/or whether participants considered themselves technologically savvy. These results will inform our discussion.

Descriptive Statistics

Years teaching business communication. To gain a broader understanding of our participants and their experience teaching business communication, we asked participants to classify their teaching the subject using the categories presented in Table 1.

Table 1: How long have you been teaching business communication? (Q2)

Response	% [a]
Less than 5 years	12.90
Between 5 and 10 years	27.96
Between 11 and 15 years	20.43
More than 15 years	38.71

[a] n = 93

The majority of the respondents (over 87%) reported that they have been teaching for more than five years, illustrating a breadth of teaching experience by respondents.

Extent of technology coverage during business communication class time. To frame how frequently technology is currently used in classroom discussions or demonstrations, we asked participants to classify the amount of time they spend talking about or using technology during class using the categories presented in Table 2.

Table 2: When teaching business communication, how much of your class involves talking about or using technology when communicating? (Q4)

Response	% [a]
Less than 10%	13.48
Between 10% and 24%	32.58
Between 25% and 49%	32.58
More than 50%	21.35

[a] n = 89

Collectively, technology is prevalent in the curriculum with more than 50% of respondents indicating they included technology more than 25% of the class. There was a difference in how much class time involved technology: 66.66% of instructors who have taught less than 5 years included it in less than 25% of their course, whereas 30.56% of instructors who taught for more than 15 years included technology more than 50% of the course. This intriguing discrepancy may be attributed to participants' differing definitions of technology. For example, participants may have differing opinions on whether routine software, such as PowerPoint or Prezi slides, constitutes technology or simply another part of the teaching landscape. This difference in perspective might indicate that only "more complex" or "higher-level" digital tools (such as AI or social media) would meet the threshold to be defined as "technology" for the emerging generation of educators. This distinction is important for future studies.

Self-classification of technology proficiency. With the value of self-identification in mind, we asked participants to classify their technology proficiency using the categories presented in Table 3.

Table 3: If you were to evaluate yourself on your proficiency in using technology, you would be ___? (Q5)

Response	Total %	Teaching Less than 5 yrs. % [a]	Teaching more than 15 yrs. % [b]
A dinosaur. You only use technology when required.	1.11	0.00	2.78
A late adopter. You use new technology after others have tried it and all the "bugs are worked out."	18.89	33.33	13.89
A curious user. You like technology and will try new tools, but after some research of your own.	52.22	41.67	55.56
An early adopter. You are comfortable using new technology and are often the first to try out new tools.	27.78	25.00	27.78

[a] n = 12
[b] n = 36

Collectively, most users considered themselves somewhat proficient in technology, with only 20% identifying as dinosaurs or late adopters. Not surprisingly, the only instructor who identified as "a dinosaur" had taught more than 15 years; 55.56% of this same group (teaching more than 15 years) identified as curious users, and 27.78% considered themselves early adopters. Interestingly, more "seasoned" instructors considered themselves earlier adopters. These percentages of early adopters are higher than Rogers's (1962) adoption curve research on technology adoption by the general population would indicate, as early adopters, on average, comprised 13.5% of a sample. This higher rate could be attributed to an embedded value of emerging technology in academia and the role of faculty in technology education.

Additional self-identification of technology proficiency. To further identify technology proficiency, we asked participants to classify themselves as "techies" or "not techies" in Table 4.

Table 4: Do you consider yourself a "techie?" (Q12)

Response	% [a]
Yes	31.71
No	68.29

[a] n = 82

Although a relatively high percentage of instructors considered themselves comfortable with technology, only 31.71% considered themselves a "techie." Only one of the newer instructors

considered themselves a non-techie, but 22 (68.75%) of instructors who taught more than 15 years identified as non-technies.

Use of AI and Writing Ability. To investigate participants' perspectives on the impact of AI on writing ability, we asked participants to choose from one of 5 Likert Scale-based items, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: How do you think the use of AI will ultimately affect writing ability? (Q11)

Response	% [a]
A lot. AI will likely make people poorer writers because they rely on it too much.	15.00
Some. If not checked, people will use it more than they should, so writing will not be as effective.	36.25
None.	7.50
Some. AI will help people become better writers because it will help the message be clearer because grammar will be improved	26.25
A lot. AI will help people improve their writing because AI will learn and provide more creative and correct messages.	15.00

[a] n = 80

Most participants (92.5%) indicated that AI would affect writing in some way, though a dichotomy emerged on whether the impact would be positive (41.25%) or negative (51.25%). Interestingly, newer instructors were more likely to believe that student writing would be negatively affected by using AI. Table 6 disaggregates this data based on teaching experience to provide further insight.

Table 6: Disaggregated Responses from Table 5 Based on Teaching Experience

Response	% Teaching less than 5 yrs. [a]	% Teaching more than 15 yrs. [b]
A lot. AI will likely make people poorer writers because they rely on it too much.	22.22	13.33
Some. If not checked, people will use it more than they should, so writing will not be as effective.	44.44	33.33
None.	11.11	6.67
Some. AI will help people become better writers because it will help the message be clearer because grammar will be improved	22.22	26.67
A lot. AI will help people improve their writing because AI will learn and provide more creative and correct messages.	0.0	20.00

[a] n = 12

[b] n = 36

When we review results based on experience teaching business communication, instructors with less experience are more likely to believe that writing will be less effective with AI, whereas 20% of instructors with more experience believe the technology will help improve writing a lot.

What is the value of teaching without technology? Both techies and non-techies acknowledged the benefits of teaching with technology in this open-ended question. One techie noted the necessity of technology in today's world, "One cannot communicate in the year 2023 without technology," and even a non-techie remarked, "Technology is woven into our existence." Twenty-five percent of participants saw no value in teaching without technology, while 7.04% were unsure of the value of teaching without technology. At the same time, many participants (23.94%) focused on the importance of developing soft skills outside of technology use, especially interpersonal skills (19.72%), sharing that "students are craving interpersonal interactions" and calling the ability to engage in effective human interactions an "essential skill." In like fashion, 21.13% of participants mentioned core skills development, and 22.54% mentioned an enhanced learning experience when technology is put aside.

A text analysis of the open-ended responses to the question concerning the value of teaching with or without technology was completed in a four-step process, resulting in Table 7. The first step involved coding each of the responses using *in vivo* codes, which are codes derived from the respondents' own words (Yin, 2011). In this manner, nineteen codes emerged with each being built from the participants' precise responses. In the second step, the open responses were reviewed again and assigned one or more of the *in vivo* codes derived from the first step, which ensured we did not neglect to assign any codes derived from later responses to the first responses. This practice is common in qualitative research. During this step, the number of codes decreased to seventeen due to consolidation of 4 of the previous *in vivo* codes. In the final step, the seventeen codes were sorted into five functional categories, listed in Table 7. Further review and consolidation occurred, as well. For example, for the purpose of this study, critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills were consolidated; likewise, better focus and minimized distraction were consolidated. Under the categories of Soft Skills Development and Enhanced Learning Experience, sub-categories are included.

Table 7: What is the value of teaching without technology? (Q16)

Category	#	%[a]
None	18	25.35
Unsure*	5	7.04
Soft Skills Development	17	23.94
Intrapersonal Skills	*14*	*19.72*
Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving Skills	*6*	*8.45*
Core Skills Development	15	21.13
Enhanced Learning Experience	16	22.54
Better Focus (Minimized Distraction)	*6*	*8.45*
More Effective Learning (Retention)	*9*	*12.68*
A Break from Screen Time	*4*	*5.63*

Note. Two of the responses included in this category were non-committal, citing "it depends" but fit best in this overall category for the sake of this study.
[a] n = 71

What advice can you give about teaching business communication in an increasingly more technological world? We used this open-ended question to allow participants to share their experiences with teaching with technology and provide advice to their peers, which resulted in Table 8. We chose not to specifically reference AI in the question, though many participants focused on AI in their responses. A text analysis of the responses to this question resulted in nine initial codes, which we reviewed in a second round of analysis in a similar manner as with the previous open response question. After consolidation, six main categories, listed in Table 8, emerged. Under the category of Teaching Emerging Technology with the Job in Mind, one subcategory is included.

Table 8: What advice can you give about teaching business communication in an increasingly more technological world? (Q14)

Category	#	%[a]
<u>*Advice About Technology*</u>		
Embrace and Model Emerging Technology	55	75.34
Stay Up-to-Date and Explore Trends	22	30.14
Teaching Emerging Technology with the Job in Mind	20	27.40
Use Realistic Examples	*7*	*9.6*
<u>*Advice Adjacent to Technology*</u>		
Teach Core Skills (writing, communication, etc.)	15	20.55
Teach Soft Skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, etc.)	12	16.44
Know the Limitations of Technology	8	10.96

[a] n = 74

Seventy-five percent of participants recommended embracing emerging technologies, modeling them, and using them in the classroom when possible. If students see instructors effectively

using a new technology, they may more readily accept its value in their own lives (Common Sense Education, 2023). Likewise, they may also use it more effectively and even more ethically by seeing a knowledgeable role model use it first. However, instructors should first understand the positive and negative attributes of AI before addressing them with students which naturally warrants professional development. Another 30.14% specifically recommended staying up-to-date and exploring new trends. Participants also valued teaching with technology with students' future jobs in mind (27.40%) and applying realistic examples (9.6%) while doing so.

Discussion

Responses to this survey largely supported teaching with technology but underscored providing time for important soft skills and core skills development.

Research Question 1 asked how business communication instructors perceive the impact of AI and other emerging technologies in the curriculum. In response to the current research on incorporating AI into our curriculum, many instructors are actively trying to find ways to successfully do this. Regardless of teaching experience, the instructors are confident in their ability to prepare students to use technology and are actively looking for ways to prepare students for the digital world. Instructors recognize that the curriculum should address the need to develop digital communication skills (Joglekar et al., 2022; Explorance, 2023).

Based on responses to the open-ended questions, instructors are concerned about how AI will affect the overall writing ability of students because they feel students may become too reliant on the technology, using it in place of developing and applying their own skillsets, especially those related to soft skills. Instructors recognize that teaching with a focus on soft skills like oral communication, idea development, organization, and critical thinking can help to develop the interpersonal and critical thinking skills needed to be an effective communicator (Cyphert et al., 2019). Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring the development of those soft skills was not hindered by AI use, even suggesting “taking breaks” from using technology throughout their courses. Teaching with limited technology may also have benefits unrelated to business classes, including minimized distractions in the classroom and better retention of business communication concepts, as indicated in Table 7. Although some instructors stated that there was no value to teaching without technology, these responses may have been referring to the need to teach with a minimum amount of technology, and not that they did not think learning soft skills and core skills were important. In fact, AI can enhance the development of these skills (Cardon et al., 2023).

The comments from respondents suggest that business communication instructors need to develop and improve students' self-efficacy of their communication skills. Improved self-efficacy will help students understand the value of AI in the workplace, which in turn will help students be confident in their professional writing ability (Petruzziello et al., 2021).

Research Question 2 explored perspectives on how business communication skills and technology may coexist in the business communication curriculum. These business

communication skills may include core skills, such as writing, and soft skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving. In fact, 20.55% of participants mentioned core skills, and 16.44% mentioned soft skills in their responses to Question 14 concerning teaching in a technological world. Had the question been focused more precisely on core skills and soft skills, we believe these figures would be much higher, but the focus of our study was explorative; therefore, we did not specify core skills and soft skills. A future study may investigate and even rank the importance of these types of skills when using technology.

Research Question 3 sought advice from early adopters of technology. For respondents who identified themselves as “techies,” the survey asked for advice on how to continue to teach the course. These participants could be considered early adopters of the technology, so they likely have the experience to provide useful feedback to others. Respondents took a positive approach with their advice and seemed to want to provide inspirational advice instead of direct suggestions. This outlook concerning AI is evident in the respondents’ open-ended responses where over 75% included comments that related to embracing and modeling the use of technology. Being able to exhibit its proper use will build confidence for instructors and students.

Selected responses from instructors provide guidance to help their peers as they learn ways to adapt to the curriculum changes:

- Know the limitations of the tools you want to use and also learn how to write without the help of a machine so that you can spot possible problems.
- Lean in. Make mistakes. We are all learning together.
- Stay informed. Be curious. Don't de [sic] afraid.
- Take it in small doses. It's unnecessary to dive into the deep end, but continual experimentation bit by bit can help even the most apprehensive instructor.

As with all new approaches to teaching, training is needed to help instructors understand how to properly use the technology and its positive and negative aspects.

Limitations and Future Research

An emerging consideration for both this study and for future studies involves defining technology, as briefly indicated in the Results section. One participant suggested that a pencil could be considered technology. Some participants may have viewed PowerPoint slides, which we will define as "low-level learning tech" as technology, while others may have considered these tools as simply "part of the job" and only categorized "high-level tech," such as simulation engines and AI as technology. The distinction could have affected our results.

An additional limitation of this study is that it does not distinguish between approaches or experiences among different teaching modalities. Faculty who teach online classes may accept and implement emerging technologies, such as AI, more broadly than those who teach in-

person or hybrid classes. Future studies may seek information on modalities to ascertain whether differences exist.

This study is limited due to the sample size and the targeted participants' area of expertise. Because the target participants were limited to educators who were members of the Association for Business Communication, the results may not be generalizable to other fields of business, though the findings provide an important starting point for a more extensive study, as well as potential analysis of differences in perspective among the sub-fields of business. Likewise, while the sample size in this study appeared to converge upon saturation, a larger sample (or even a sample surveyed at a future date when AI is more commonly integrated into the curriculum) may provide varying results. At the same time, a more internationally representative sample may be of interest in a future study, as it could provide diverse and enlightening results. Future studies may also choose to focus on how soft skills can be enhanced by the use of AI in the classroom and best practices in doing so.

Implications for Teaching

Overall, participants were largely open to embracing new technologies with the general caveat that the fundamental components of communication are still needed to help our students learn to use that technology in an efficient way. Topics such as channel choice, tone, and audience analysis are part of the soft skills that need to be addressed in classes to help students evaluate how technology will affect their future career communications.

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Appendix – Survey

Tech in BCOM

Q1 You are being asked to participate in a research study involving your experience and perceptions as a business communication instructor. We are interested in learning how you deliver your course in a dynamic technological environment. So that you can provide rich feedback, this mixed-method study will require you to provide written responses to many of our questions This questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

This study is being conducted by Authors. Your responses are confidential. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Any concerns with this research may be directed to Authors.

- o I agree to participate in this survey.
- o I do not agree to participate in this survey.

Q2 How long have you been teaching business communication?

- o Less than 5 years
- o Between 5 – 10 years
- o Between 11 – 15 years
- o More than 15 years

Q3 What changes have you witnessed throughout your tenure as a business educator?

Q4 When teaching business communication, how much of your class involves talking about or using technology when communicating?

- o Less than 10%
- o Between 10 – 24%
- o Between 25 – 49%
- o More than 50%

Q5 If you were to evaluate yourself on your proficiency in using technology, you would be

- o A dinosaur. You only use technology when required.
- o A late adopter. You use new technology after others have tried it and all the "bugs are worked out."
- o A curious user. You like technology and will try new tools, but after some research of your own.
- o An early adopter. You are comfortable using new technology and are often the first to try out new tools.

Q6 Merriam-Webster defines artificial intelligence (AI) as "the capability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behavior." How are you using AI in your personal and professional lives?

Q7 Discuss your first impressions of AI and how you came to be a user or why you are not currently a user.

Q8 Do you think AI is useful in the business context? What uses might it have?

Q9 Do you plan to or are you using AI in your course(s)?

- Yes
- No

Q10 Why or Why not?

Q11 How do you think the use of AI will ultimately effect writing ability?

- A lot. AI will likely make people poorer writers because they rely on it too much.
- Some. If not checked, people will use it more than they should, so writing will not be as effective.
- None
- Some. AI will help people become better writers because it will help the message be clearer because grammar will be improved
- A lot. AI will help people improve their writing because AI will learn and provide more creative and correct messages.

Q12 Do you consider yourself a "techie?"

- Yes
- No

Q13 How will you continue to teach your courses?

Q14 What advice can you give about teaching business communication in an increasingly more technological world?

Q15 What do you see as the greatest opportunities of technology like AI in the future for business communication?

Q16 What is the value of teaching WITHOUT technology?