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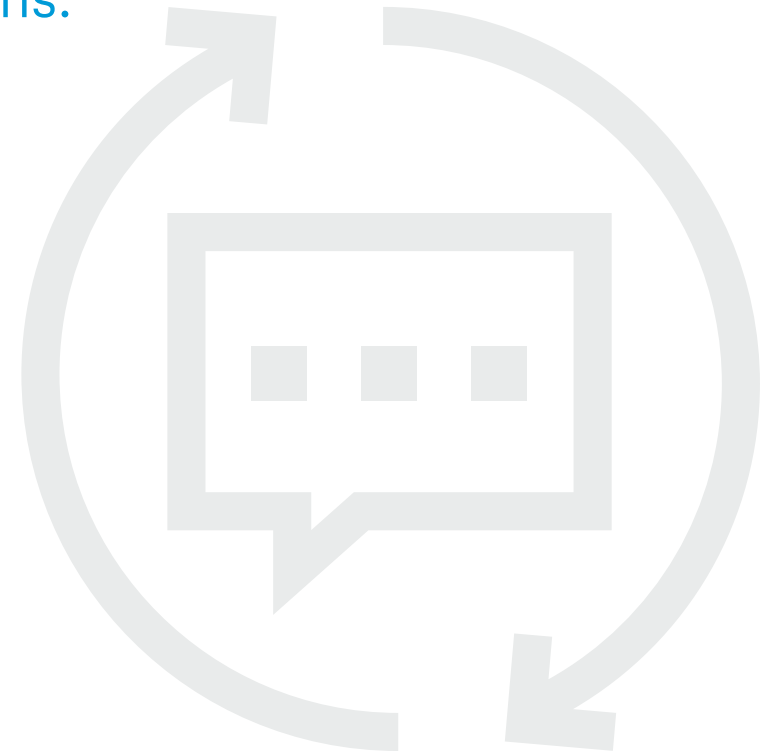
How Generative AI Is Used to Support Executive Communications



Generative AI (GenAI) offers significant opportunities to improve the quality and timeliness of executive messaging. Chief communications officers (CCOs) can use these data insights about how their peers are using GenAI to build a safe and effective approach across all executive communications.



Elizabeth Kilbride
Senior Director Analyst



Overview

Key findings

- Chief communications officers are more likely than other executives to report the organizational adoption of GenAI tools in executive communications.
- CCOs' sensitivity to the internal and external risks of GenAI tools, including inappropriate use and impersonation, makes them critical advisors on the use of GenAI in executive communications.
- Efficiency and quality are the key benefits of current use cases, such as drafting and tailoring content, according to those using GenAI tools in executive communications.

Recommendations

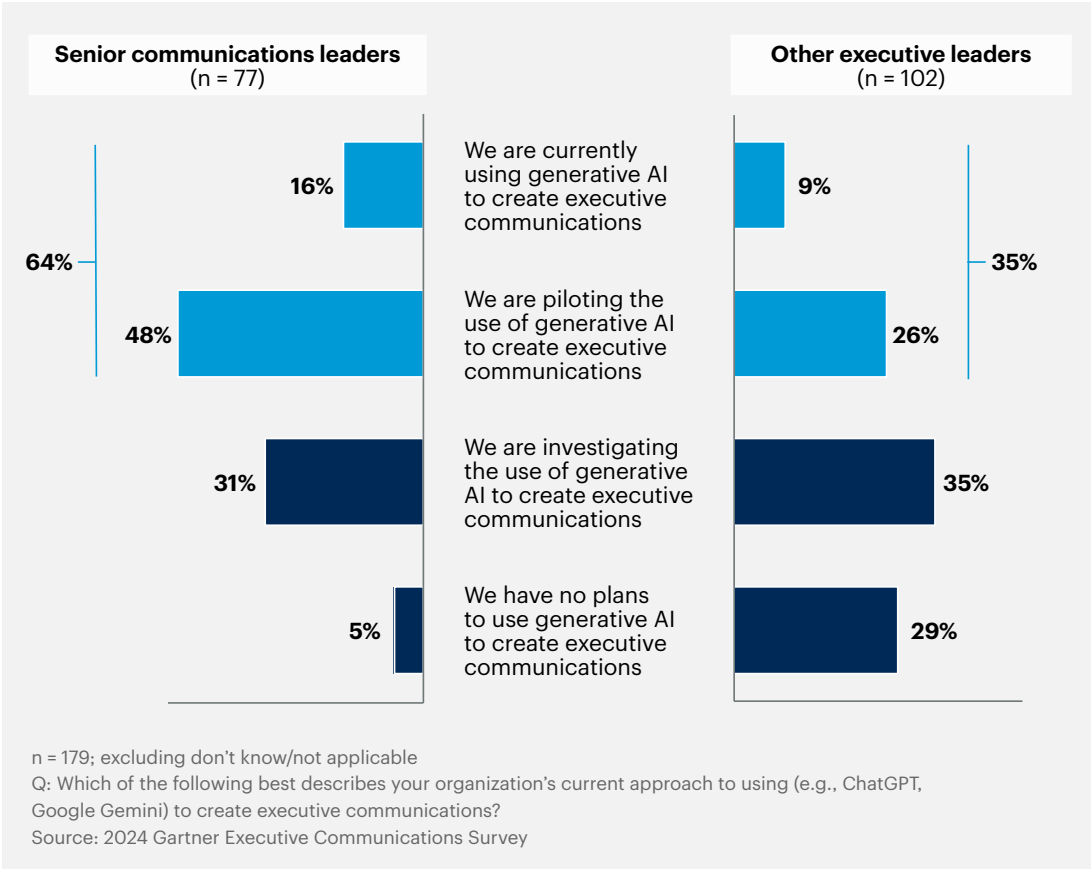
- Identify high-value use cases for GenAI tools specific to executive communications, including the development of messaging tailored to specific executive styles and to key target audiences.
- Sensitize executives to the internal and external risks of GenAI use, including security, ethics, legality and reputation risk.
- Foster the responsible use of GenAI tools in executive communications and create opportunities for best practice sharing, learning and discovery.

Communications’ role in activating GenAI for executive communications

GenAI tools promise significant productivity gains, and many Communications functions are exploring whether and how to integrate the technology into their workflows. One area of exploration is how GenAI tools can efficiently create high-quality executive communications.

Communications leaders are more likely than other executive leaders to report that their organization is using GenAI in executive communications (see Figure 1). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Communications leaders report currently using or piloting GenAI tools, compared to only 35% of other executives. This finding suggests that Communications is using GenAI in executive communications more frequently than executives themselves, as well as that executives may be unaware of the use of GenAI in executive communications. Only 5% of Communications leaders say their organization has no plans to use GenAI to create executive communications.

Figure 1. Extent of GenAI use for executive communications



Based on current evidence, the use of GenAI tools doesn't guarantee an improvement in the performance of executive communications. This finding suggests that these tools do not create value in and of themselves; instead, Communications teams must create this value through the targeted application of their use. Consistent with other decisions, CCOs must make around technology adoption and use; the features and functionalities of any given tool are insufficient to achieve success. Instead, how those tools are used in service of organizational objectives, as well as ensuring the requisite skills and capabilities among the team to execute on those use cases are most critical.

Promote appropriate use while sensitizing leaders to risk

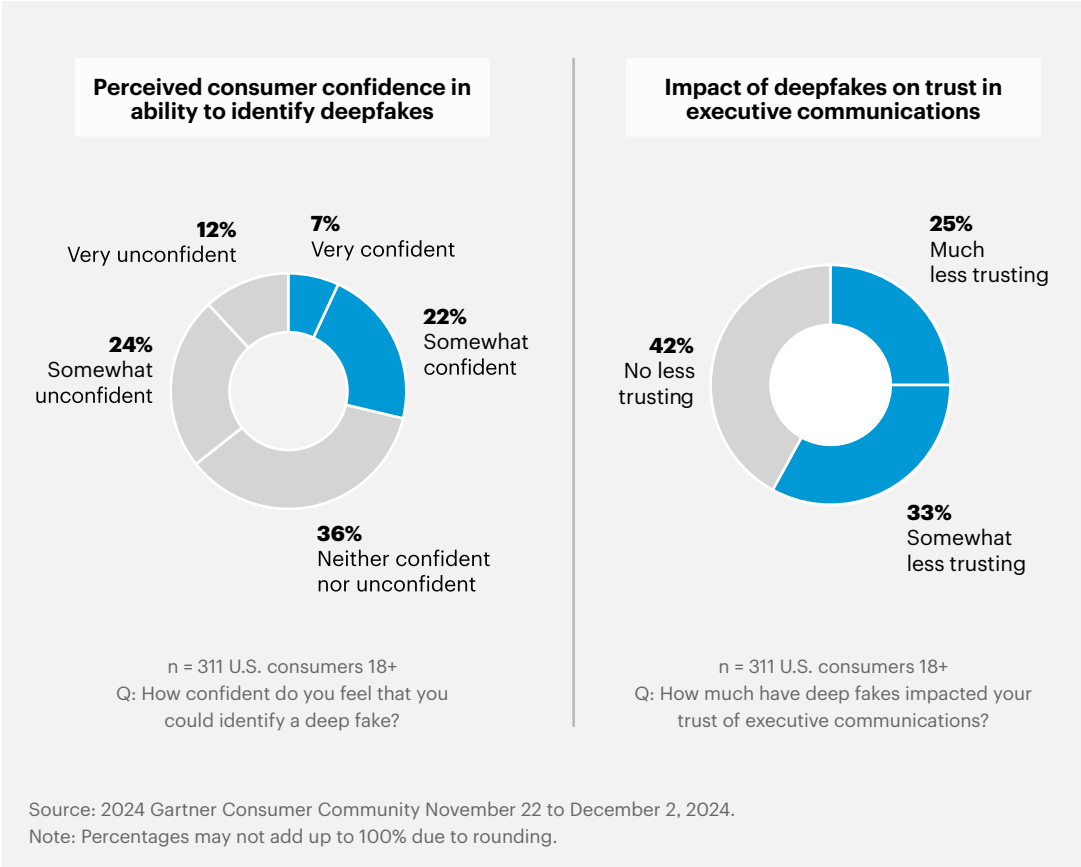
CCOs are well-placed to guide their organization's use of GenAI in executive communications by understanding and executing on its potential. Not only are they more likely to use the technology, but they are also more likely to be sensitive to the internal and external risks of its use.

Fewer executive leaders are concerned about the risks of misinformation (15%) and impersonation (17%) than Communications leaders (25% and 35%, respectively). The risks of impersonation and misinformation are exacerbated by the capabilities of GenAI tools, but one-third of executives report being "not at all concerned" about GenAI-enabled impersonations of themselves and their peers.

Audiences, however, are already running into these kinds of impersonations. Nearly one in four U.S. consumers surveyed reported coming across deepfakes or AI impersonations, with some of these deepfakes impersonating executives or company leaders directly. As deepfakes become more commonplace, audiences have a tougher time distinguishing between real messaging and fakery, posing real risks of hampering how audiences perceive communications.

Just 29% of consumers surveyed are very or somewhat confident that they could identify a deepfake, and more than half reported less trust in executive communications specifically due to deepfakes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Consumer perspective on deepfakes and executive communications



CCOs must ensure GenAI use in executive communications supports efficient, effective content creation and deployment. This mandate requires building executives' understanding of appropriate use and sensitizing them to risks to reap quality and efficiency gains without fracturing audience trust.

Current uses of GenAI in executive communications

Communications leaders and executives at organizations using or piloting GenAI in executive communications reported several perceived benefits and uses. The most frequently mentioned benefits were improved efficiency and quality of content creation, across several reported use cases (see Table 1).



Table 1. Reported benefits and uses of GenAI tools in executive communications

Reported benefits	Reported uses	Illustrative quotes
<p>Efficiency gains, indicated by mentions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed • Streamlining 	<p>Copy drafting, including messaging, presentations, reports, updates, speeches, marketing and product collateral, newsletters, and briefs or summaries. Less frequently reported were the use of GenAI tools in drafting crisis communications, thought leadership, media outreach, and/or responses to media or stakeholder inquiries.</p>	<p>Noted efficiency gains with specific uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tools like these streamline executive newsletters, saving valuable time.” • “Policy briefs and public notices are drafted with greater speed and accuracy.” • “We use AI to streamline press release creation and ensure timely distribution.”
	<p>Content tailoring, both to a given audience and to the executive communicating (e.g., email campaigns and client pitches, content to different industry sectors)</p>	<p>Noted quality improvements with specific uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Generative tools enable quick and polished responses to stakeholder queries.” • “We use it to help tighten outlines or make phrases more concise. It is helpful with social media copy and to trim the fat on shorter-form content.” • “To draft concise executive communications, such as reports, emails and presentations, ensuring clarity, professionalism and tailored messaging for stakeholders.”
<p>Quality improvements, indicated by mentions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience resonance • Clarity • Concision • Consistency • Simplification 	<p>Content ideation (e.g., brainstorming)</p>	
	<p>Competitive landscape analysis (e.g., assessment of competitor communications and industry sentiment)</p>	

Note: Some verbatim responses were lightly edited for grammar and clarity.
Source: Gartner

Use case: Copy drafting

Surveyed communications leaders and executives mentioned the development of drafts of written content most frequently. Instances of using GenAI to create the first draft often had the caveat of requiring human oversight and review; in other instances, humans created the draft and outsourced its review to generative AI tools. In both cases, GenAI assists rather than completely replaces human involvement in drafting written content. Human review of AI-generated content ensures accuracy and relevance.

“We have established an in-house solution, which can be used to create drafts based on prompts; however, the output is reviewed and considered a working draft. More often, we input communications and ask for feedback.”

– Executive Leader, 2024 Gartner Executive Communications Survey

Use case: Content tailoring

Another key reported use and benefit of GenAI is content tailoring. Reports included both tailoring to a given audience and the executive communicating. For example:

- One IT leader reports, “We are using ChatGPT to revise our comms and to target it to individual sets of groups, such as employees, shareholders and the board.”
- One Communications leader reports synthesizing “past remarks to better understand tone, cadence, intonation, style of different executives.”

Vendors and tools

Communications leaders and other executives most frequently report using ChatGPT in executive communications, and many mentioned using an internal, protected version for enterprise use. One leader mentioned training executives on personal GPTs (i.e., tailored versions of ChatGPT, in which the user can provide additional information/data or templates and instructions to achieve specific tasks). Two other tools mentioned were Microsoft Copilot and Perplexity AI, and some additional mentions of in-house solutions were not attributed to any particular vendor.

CCOs must ensure the security of the platform they are using and that the inputs and outputs both adhere to company policy. Some organizations have AI councils or working groups responsible for establishing policies and best practices around AI use to mitigate risks, determining high-value use cases, and assessing potential tools and vendors against company priorities. While CCOs at different organizations are variously involved in these groups or in developing AI policies more broadly, they are responsible for ensuring they and their teams adhere to guidance on the appropriate usage of approved tools. They need to be prepared to handle fallout in the event if something goes awry.

How CCOs can foster responsible use of GenAI in executive communications

There are both risks and benefits to using GenAI in executive communications, as with its use more broadly. Using GenAI can drive efficiency and quality in the use cases described, but CCOs should proceed cautiously. This approach requires influencing both their own teams and executives to explore the tools for targeted uses while maintaining restrictions on use to ensure safety and efficacy. CCOs should:

- **Share** targeted use cases with executives
- **Communicate** guardrails for responsible use
- **Create** opportunities for learning and discovery

Share targeted uses

Because nearly one-third (29%) of executives reported that their organization had no plans to use GenAI to create executive communications, it is possible that many executives are unaware of current efforts and/or plans to use GenAI. CCOs at these organizations should share how these tools are currently in use within the function, particularly those applications relevant to executives' own communications responsibilities. The ability to tailor communications is a particularly high-value use case for executive communications and communications more broadly. As with all technology, leaders can focus their efforts and the efforts of executives across their organization on the outcomes these tools can help them drive.

Communicate guardrails

When socializing potential uses of GenAI tools and the benefits executives can expect, CCOs should communicate guardrails for responsible use. To do so requires providing both an internal and external perspective on GenAI's risks:

- To manage legal, ethical and safety concerns, share how different use cases and tools may or may not fit company policy.
- To manage reputational risk, sensitize executives to audience perceptions about the use of GenAI and emphasize the importance of maintaining an authentic and human voice and connection.

As writers become accustomed to using GenAI for drafting, they may not notice how it genericizes language and removes the distinctiveness of individual or brand voices. Training GenAI tools on particular styles, and making effective use of prompt engineering, can help mitigate this effect.

Effective guardrails help mitigate risks and direct executives to those targeted uses with the most potential for value. They may also be needed to limit the organization's use of GenAI tools: unrestricted usage could eventually exceed quotas and become expensive.

Create opportunities for learning

Finally, CCOs should create opportunities for learning and discovery. GenAI users can be brought together in communities of practice to share how they are using different applications, with the ability to ask questions, share best practices, and promote the safe and effective use of tools. These communities can support the adoption of GenAI tools broadly or more narrowly support early adopters of specific tools (e.g., for tools in piloting phase, before they are more broadly rolled out). These spaces can also help build a sense of community and support a culture shift that will help drive broader adoption.

For executives and communications team members supporting executive communications, prompt engineering can be a particularly helpful area of learning and discovery. Communities of practice can provide real-time support to obtain feedback on prompts and share challenges in achieving their desired outputs with given query language. Successes and lessons are worth capturing: some organizations also report having prompt libraries or tools for writing prompts (e.g., templates for proven prompt formulas).


Conclusion

As early adopters of GenAI tools who are sensitive to the risks of their use, CCOs should focus on use cases that have high potential to improve the efficiency and quality of executive communications, such as content drafting and tailoring. CCOs should also engage executives with responsible uses of these tools and provide opportunities to bring users together to share best practices.



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