CISION®

FROM AI TO Z

A STARTER GUIDE TO USING GENERATIVE AI IN PR & COMMS

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INTRODUCTION:
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) surged into the spotlight in 2023 thanks to the emergence of generative tools such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat and Google's Bard, alongside image creators DALLE-2 and Midjourney.

With exponential growth and widespread adoption of this technology, generative AI is quickly filtering into many different sectors and industries — and the world of PR and corporate communications is no exception.

These rapidly evolving technologies are already having a significant impact on the industry, underscoring the need for strategic communicators and PR professionals to understand the opportunities and challenges generative AI presents.

The purpose of this guide is to empower PR and corporate communications teams with the information they need to:
- **UNDERSTAND** and take advantages of the opportunities AI provides
- **ANTICIPATE** and navigate the challenges of this technology
- **ENSURE** ethical, responsible usage of AI
- **MAINTAIN** and invest in human-led creativity and professional development

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AI IN PR AND CORPORATE COMMS

AI might seem like an exciting new technology right now, thanks to the emergence of generative tools like ChatGPT, but in truth we've been living with it for some time. Once a product of science fiction writers and Hollywood epics – think the near-future Los Angeles in Her or Tony Stark's computer J.A.R.V.I.S. from the Marvel films – AI is firmly and productively a part of the real world.
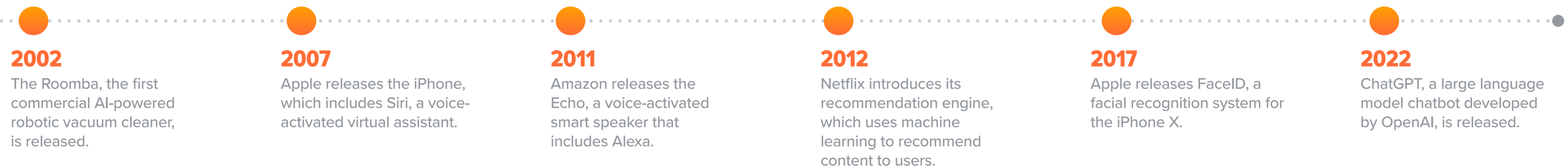
In fact, for many of us, AI is already a part of our everyday lives. Machine learning algorithms, the method by which AI systems respond to user input and perform tasks, are the foundation of smart home tech like Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri voice assistants. The FaceID function you use to unlock your smartphone is powered by AI, as is the Netflix recommendation engine that suggests your next series binge.

Even in the world of PR and communications, AI has been hard at work behind the scenes long before the arrival of ChatGPT.

Sentiment analysis, for example, which has been present in the comms space for over a decade, is underpinned by natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning. These two subsets of AI are used to understand the emotions expressed in text and classify them as positive, negative or neutral.

While the capability of a machine to understand human language is not new, the rise of ChatGPT, built on a large language model (LLM) to interact with humans in a conversational way, has opened up possibilities for communicators to shape content with AI as a viable creative partner.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN RECENT AI HISTORY

2002
The Roomba, the first commercial AI-powered robotic vacuum cleaner, is released.

2007
Apple releases the iPhone, which includes Siri, a voice-activated virtual assistant.

2011
Amazon releases the Echo, a voice-activated smart speaker that includes Alexa.

2012
Netflix introduces its recommendation engine, which uses machine learning to recommend content to users.

2017
Apple releases FaceID, a facial recognition system for the iPhone X.

2022
ChatGPT, a large language model chatbot developed by OpenAI, is released.

UNDERSTANDING THE APPLICATIONS AND BENEFITS

At its core, generative AI can do much of the work humans do, but in far less time. Here are some key examples of areas where AI is already supporting PR and comms teams:

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCE SENTIMENT

Analyzing and understanding what people are saying about your brand, getting to grips with the emotional tone in a piece of text, and tracking it across multiple channels like social media, news articles or press releases, are vital for comms teams. This activity is more commonly known in PR as sentiment analysis, which uses natural language processing (NLP) to process this information at speed and deliver a verdict.

CREATING EXECUTIVE-READY NEWS BRIEFINGS

Summarization AI tools can sift through news sources to create condensed versions of multiple articles, generate summaries of social media conversations and identify emerging trends. This is particularly useful for comms teams tasked with creating media coverage briefings.
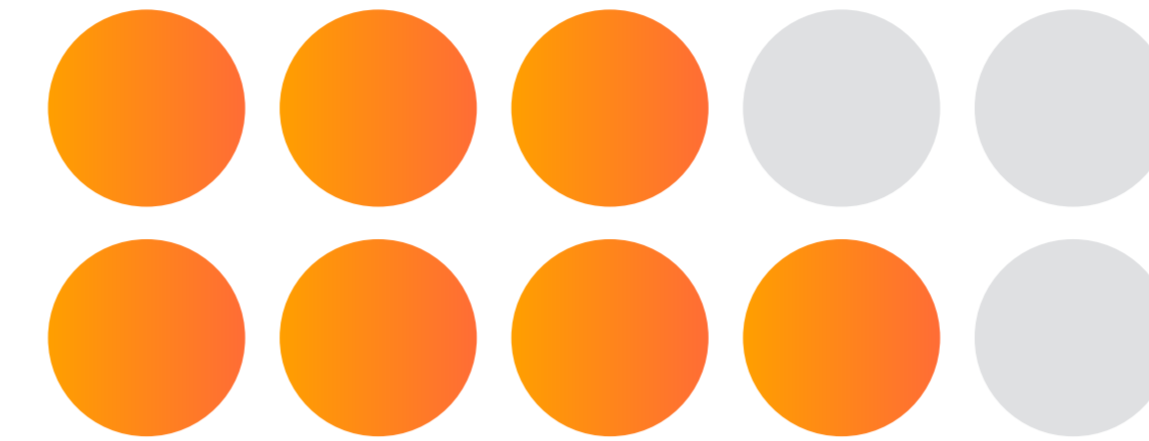
70% of communications leaders struggle with "creating content that is effective"

CREATING CONTENT FOR DIFFERENT PLATFORMS & AUDIENCES

According to the Global Comms Report, 70% of communications leaders struggle with "creating content that is effective." AI can ease that burden. From drafting media pitches and press releases to writing social media posts and articles, generative AI can speed up and streamline content creation. Even better, you can also use AI to tailor messages and content to different target audiences. For example, PR professionals can use AI to create article versions of a press release for specific media outlets, or create social media posts targeted to specific channels or demographics.

ANALYZING DATA AND IDENTIFYING TRENDS

Generative AI can be used to analyze large amounts of data and identify trends. This information can be used by PR professionals to make better decisions about their campaigns and to identify new opportunities.

MONITORING BRAND REPUTATION

Generative AI can be used to monitor brand reputation by interpreting social media conversations, news coverage, and other online mentions. This information can be used by PR professionals to identify potential crises early on and to take steps to mitigate damage.

The applications for AI in PR are only growing. Using AI to automate various tasks or streamline workflows ultimately frees up time to focus on more strategic and creative work – not to mention building those critical human relationships at the core of the profession.

AI DEFINITIONS: A Cheat Sheet of Need-to-Know Terms

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)	Computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.	**LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL (LLM)**	An algorithm trained on a body of content that's been developed to produce text, respond to questions using natural language, or translate material from one language to another.
CHATBOT	A computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users, especially over the internet.	**NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING (NLP)**	A field of AI that focuses on enabling computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language.
DEEPFAKE	AI-synthesized media that is false, such as doctored videos where one person's head has been placed on another person's body, or surprisingly realistic "photographs" of people who don't exist.	**PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS**	The use of data, statistical algorithms, and machine learning techniques to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data.
GENERATIVE AI	AI models that can create new and original content such as text, images, video or music, based on patterns learned from existing data. Tools like ChatGPT, Bard, BIng, Poe, Jasper, Midjourney, DALLE-2 and Synthesia are all generative AI.	**SENTIMENT ANALYSIS**	The use of natural language processing, text analysis, and computational linguistics to systematically identify and quantify subjective information such as positivity or negativity.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS AND OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

Though AI's potential to enhance and benefit the role of PR and communications is significant, there are just as many ways it can be disruptive and potentially harmful. Before you start working with AI, it is important to understand the limitations, challenges, and potential downfalls of its applications.

6 Things PR & Comms Teams Need to Know About Generative AI

1 **AI-generated content can't be copyrighted** under existing intellectual property law; it instantly becomes part of the public domain. Only content that retains creative direction and control through human involvement can be protected by U.S. copyright.

2 **AI-generated content isn't always original.** Because large language models (LLMs) have been trained on existing content, there is always the chance anything it "generates" is actually a copy of someone else's original work or intellectual property. Thus, if you use AI-generated content without properly vetting it first to ensure that it is original, you could be putting yourself at risk for accusations of plagiarism or copyright infringement. (Getty Images and several individual artists have already filed suit against companies pioneering AI image generators over the use of their images and artistic styles.)

3 **AI-generated content lacks critical human thinking.** AI is still in its infancy and is only as good as the data it feeds on and the humans giving it feedback. The only way to guarantee accuracy or originality is to ensure anything AI generates is reviewed, vetted, and optimized by human subject matter experts.

4 **AI that has been trained on flawed content may perpetuate bias and stereotypes, or generate content that is misleading or outright false.** Imagine if an application developed to help content creators write marketing copy was trained only on social platforms such as X and public-facing Facebook content. It would only create content based on the way that other brands have already communicated on social media (thanks to its limited training set). The danger lies in porting those AI-generated results over to other situations or use cases. With that in mind, comms teams need to ensure that their data is robust enough to align with the tasks they're asking AI to do.

5 **AI-generated media is already being used maliciously, such as to create fake news.** This underscores the need for PR and comms teams to remain diligent in their media monitoring efforts. Having reliable tools and processes in place will enable you to identify misinformation that could harm your brand's reputation and respond to it before it gains traction.

6 **It can be difficult to verify the origin and authenticity of machine-generated content, which can undermine trust in the PR industry and in the media more broadly.** It is too soon to tell what guardrails – if any – will be legislated in the U.S. or internationally, for the labeling of AI-generated content, or transparency requirements for the use of generative AI. However, policy makers are already moving on this issue. In the U.S., the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) launched a request for comment (RFC) regarding AI accountability. In the UK, meanwhile, a government whitepaper outlined "responsible innovation and [maintaining] public trust in this revolutionary technology," and in April of 2023, the European Commission proposed the first regulatory framework for AI.

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> AI lacks the empathy that only a human with an absolute understanding of a problem can solve, and it's not even remotely ready to help us build and maintain the relationships that allow many of us to succeed.

ANTONY COUSINS
Executive Director of AI Strategy
Cision

MITIGATING RISKS AND PROTECTING CONSUMERS

For all of its potential benefits, AI also poses possible risks to accuracy, privacy, fairness, transparency, and equality, underscoring the need for a principled approach to ensure a responsible application of AI in the PR and communications sector.

For this reason, Cision took the initiative to create an Artificial Intelligence Code of Ethics, which outlines principles and commitments to:

Rigorous testing, validation, and ongoing monitoring to minimize potential harm

Privacy protection and security of client information

Transparent documentation and explanation of AI objectives, potential risks and mitigations

Maintaining human oversight while targeting and eliminating bias where possible

The code ensures that Cision's AI technologies adhere to ethical standards and best practices, fostering a more equitable and responsible AI ecosystem; however, the principles outlined can be applied across all communications functions and AI technologies.

⤷ **Download the full Cision Artificial Intelligence Code of Ethics here.**

HOW TO APPLY AI NOW: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR PR AND COMMS TEAMS

Now that you've gained an understanding of the challenges, opportunities and potential impact of generative AI on the public relations and communications industry, it's time to start using it and discover its potential for yourself. Use this easy, six-step guide to get started.

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOLS

There are already a lot of tools out there serving a variety of functions, so knowing where to begin can quickly get confusing and overwhelming. Start small by familiarizing yourself with some of the tools out there and which tasks each are designed for. After all, generative AI can now help you create everything from text and images to video and audio, all from scratch.

(For the purposes of this section, we'll mainly use ChatGPT to illustrate our points; however, many of these tips still apply across different applications.)

2. IDENTIFY WHAT YOU NEED FROM AI

It's important to ask exactly what you hope to achieve by using AI. The obvious way to start might be by looking at your workload to identify tasks that are repetitive or time-consuming. AI can help with such tasks as drafting press releases, writing social media posts, or responding to media inquiries.

TOOLS TO GET STARTED: We've highlighted a few of the most popular, accessible and easy-to-use generative AI tools to start experimenting with:

AI TEXT GENERATION:

ChatGPT
Bard
Bing
Jasper
Poe

These are built on Large Language Models (LLMs) and include ChatGPT, Google Bard, Bing Chat, Jasper, and Poe by Quora.

AI IMAGE GENERATION:

Midjourney
Stable Diffusion
Adobe Firefly

These tools use natural language prompts to create images and include DALL·E 2, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and Adobe Firefly.

AI VIDEO AND AUDIO GENERATION:

synthesia
PICTORY
Kaiber

Synthesia, Pictory and Kaiber can generate videos without the need for cameras, animation software, or actors.

Crucially, it can also help you craft messages for specific scenarios, such as crisis management. If you're expecting adverse public reactions to issues or events, for example, ChatGPT can help you proactively anticipate the types of questions you might get, help you craft responses, and create key messages for each stakeholder group. Just make sure you provide ChatGPT with the proper context first.

From here, prioritize using these applications based on potential impact, ease of integration, and urgency of need. This might mean focusing on high-volume tasks like social media content creation. For example, try providing ChatGPT with a press release as context and asking for a series of social media posts to accompany the release.

3. TEST AND TRAIN THE AI

Prompts are fundamental to generative AI. These are the instructions or questions you give ChatGPT to get a response. The quality of the answers you receive will depend on how well you frame your question.

Composing a press release is a good place to start. Ask the AI tool to draft a release based on a set of bullet points summarizing a new product launch, corporate announcement, or business initiative. Make sure you provide the information the AI tool will not know, such as what the product might be called or the launch date.

If the first response isn't quite right, provide feedback to improve the AI's understanding of what's required. Give it extra context, provide guidance around tone and length, or even ask it to generate a quote from a specific person to include in the release.

Another potential use case is in composing social media posts. Ask ChatGPT to look at your caption and shorten it to fit a specific character count for X. Or request an adjustment in tone to suit a more formal LinkedIn audience.

In all cases, being clear on the business and communication outcomes that you're trying to achieve will lead to a better result for any specific task. For example, you could try telling ChatGPT you want to increase clicks or shares of a certain post to drive more traffic to a specific website.

This is an iterative learning process for the AI, so there will likely be some trial and error. As you refine your request, the AI will better understand your specific needs. For this reason, try to keep your requests in line with the current "conversation" with the AI. If you want to give it a new and unrelated task, start a fresh conversation.

4. REVIEW AND EDIT THE OUTPUT

ChatGPT can produce content for you quickly, but it's still vital to review and edit the output with the human eye. Check for regional nuance in language, cross-check data and facts, as accuracy is paramount – particularly if the work is being sent out to journalists or made publicly available on social media.

AI still tends to "hallucinate" facts, including research reports and authors that don't exist. So be extra vigilant if you're asking an AI to create text from simple prompts as opposed to re-formatting or summarizing text you've provided.

It's also important to keep tone of voice in mind. AI can help you create engaging content, but it's vital to ensure that it's consistent with your brand. This is an area where you can apply your own PR and comms expertise.

Does it "sound" right? Are key messages being prioritized? Is it tailored to the right audience? Remember, you can ask the AI to provide you feedback on any text, including text the AI itself created, from a certain audience perspective but you will have emotional and intuitive experience that ChatGPT won't be able to emulate.

5. BRING AI INTO YOUR WORKFLOW

As you get comfortable with AI, start to integrate it more directly into your workflow for specific tasks. That could be composing press releases, writing social media captions, or outlining blog posts.

You'll need to measure its effectiveness, so look to track how much time you're saving or if the quality of your initial drafts has improved. Do you have a benchmark for how long it takes to get a press release from a blank page to distribution? Measure this start-to-finish process with AI, and if you're reaching the end faster that's a good indicator of its effectiveness.

If you're finding AI is having a greater positive impact on certain tasks, focus its usage there to see if you can make it even more beneficial. Once you're getting the most out of ChatGPT, you'll be able to free up time to work on more creative or strategic PR and comms work.

AI can help you create engaging content, but it's vital to ensure that it's consistent with your brand. This is an area where you can apply your own PR and comms expertise.

It's important to remember, however, that tools like ChatGPT aren't just text generators. They also have an understanding of communications principles and best practices.

ChatGPT is aware of commonly used industry frameworks like Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations and the principles of measurement and evaluation. Therefore, it's capable of drafting strategies and plans if you ask it to follow these principles, or evaluate your own strategies against these frameworks, along with scores and suggestions for improvement.

This system works even if you have your own internal framework – simply provide that as context in the prompt. All you have to do is ask.

6. EDUCATE YOURSELF ON ALL THINGS AI

AI is a fast-moving technology, and generative tools like ChatGPT are still in their infancy. Follow the latest updates from OpenAI, Google (for Bard), and Microsoft (Bing Chat) to see what new features are being implemented and how these might benefit your PR work or provide enhanced privacy and security options.

Subscribe to a free email newsletter to get new AI-related content in your inbox or consider enrolling in an online course through platforms like Coursera or Udemy to learn AI-related skills.

There is no shortage of resources available to learn about artificial intelligence. As this technology becomes more ubiquitous, those with the expertise and knowledge to use it will become more in demand and, eventually, essential. The PR teams who understand how to use AI will have a competitive advantage.

These are some initial guidelines on how PR and comms professionals can get started with AI. The more you experiment and learn, the more adept and comfortable you become, the more you will reap its potential rewards.

Five Best Practices for Working With AI

Manage your expectations

Ask yourself what you're looking to achieve and how AI can help. Don't expect AI to be able to do everything a human can and be prepared to revise if you don't get the right results. One major AI shortcoming is its inability to replicate human emotional awareness and empathy. While it can imitate these elements, human intuition and experience is still necessary.

Develop your prompt skills

Practice asking questions to generative AI tools. The more precise your question, the more accurate the response should be. And you can always ask the tool how best to pose your specific question.

If you're looking to lighten the tone of a social post, give this request to ChatGPT with some examples of feeds that are similar to what you want. You can also use text tools to give prompt suggestions for image generators like Midjourney.

Use AI ethically and responsibly

Just as humans can develop biases, AI models can also display these based on the data they're given. Be aware of these risks, and the potential for errors creeping into any AI-generated content.

Make sure that you're using AI in a way that respects the privacy and the rights of your audience, too. While AI remains unregulated, it's wise not to submit any sensitive information into generative tools.

Be transparent about your use of AI

Your audience and customers should know that they're interacting with an AI-powered tool and be given the opportunity to understand how it works.

An organization should also look to develop a code of ethics around its use of AI and make that publicly available. As new AI technologies are implemented and potential regulation comes into play, ensure that this is a "live" document and regularly revisited.

Develop AI knowledge and skills

In such a fast-moving field, it's important to develop AI literacy. Trying new tools as they come out can help here, as can experimenting with those already out there.

You might find you prefer Bing Chat over ChatGPT because it's better at showing sources. Or favor Midjourney images over DALL·E 2. Find out what works best while keeping an eye on new tools emerging.

CONCLUSION:
WHAT AI MEANS FOR THE FUTURE OF PR AND COMMS TEAMS

Generative AI tools have increased exponentially in the last year and will only continue to develop at warp speed. It's safe to say that AI is the biggest technological leap we've seen since the launch of social media or the internet itself. It's also safe to say that, like social media or the internet before it, AI will be life-changing and disruptive in ways we can't yet begin to understand.

What we do know about AI is that however quickly it advances, the human element remains critical.

Despite widespread and valid concern that AI will replace humans in various occupations, there remains – especially in the world of PR and communications – the critical need for humans to manage and work in tandem with the technology. After all, AI lacks genuine emotions and empathy, and the ability to understand nuances or "read between the lines" of problems the way humans can.

That's not to say that AI won't have a very significant impact on the PR and corporate communications industry and job market. As the relatively new saying goes, "AI isn't going to replace you. Someone who knows how to use AI will." Make it a priority to learn about AI, how the technology is evolving and the tools available – and how to use them. Knowing how to use AI is already an in-demand skill that will prove invaluable for strategic communicators.

Ultimately, AI is not set to replace human innovation and communication, but rather enhance these elements by allowing for deeper understanding of audiences, trends, and messages that matter. By accelerating and streamlining workflows, AI also frees up humans to focus on what they do best: Build those all-important relationships that make an impact, develop and execute strategic campaigns, and manage crises with care and compassion.

The ability to embrace change, explore new ideas, and be agile is a hallmark of PR and corporate communications professionals. Think of artificial intelligence as a whole new opportunity to experiment, get even more creative, and amplify the value you bring to your team and clients.

The future of AI is full of potential, and while it may challenge some traditional notions of work and creativity, leaning into and adapting to these technological advancements will be essential for thriving now and in the years to come.

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15 PROMPTS TO TRY TODAY FOR PR SPECIFIC TASKS

Whether you want help writing press release, putting together a pitch or just need to brainstorm campaign ideas, try these prompts and let generative AI do the rest.

1 "Can you help me draft a press release about our upcoming product launch?"

2 "I need assistance in creating a pitch to attract media coverage for our charity event. Could you provide some ideas?"

3 "Let's brainstorm some innovative PR campaign ideas to promote our new line of sustainable fashion products."

4 "We're facing a potential crisis situation with a customer complaint. Can you suggest how to address this in a way that minimizes negative impact?"

5 "I'm looking to refine the key messages for our client's brand. Can you help me come up with concise and impactful messaging?"

6 "We need to expand our media contacts database. Could you help me find relevant journalists and media outlets in the tech industry?"

7 "Our CEO has an upcoming interview with a major news outlet. Can you provide some talking points and tips for a successful interview?"

8 "We're planning a social media campaign for our restaurant client. Can you help generate engaging content ideas that highlight their unique cuisine?"

9 "I'd like to understand how our brand is currently perceived by the public. Can you help me analyze sentiment from recent social media mentions?"

10 "Our client wants to establish themselves as a thought leader in their industry. Could you assist in writing an insightful blog post on the latest industry trends?"

11 "We're organizing a product launch event next month. How can we effectively promote it to ensure a strong turnout and media coverage?"

12 "I need insights into our main competitors' recent PR efforts. Can you help me analyze their media coverage and messaging?"

13 "We're considering partnering with influencers for our beauty brand. Could you provide guidance on identifying and reaching out to the right influencers?"

14 "We want to be prepared for any potential crises in the future. Can you help us outline a comprehensive crisis communication plan?"

15 "We're wrapping up a PR campaign. How should we measure its success? Can you suggest some key performance indicators (KPIs) to track?"

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Want to learn more about how AI technology can enhance your PR and corporate communications strategy? We can help.

Cision is the leading provider of consumer and media intelligence and communications solutions, enabling public relations, marketing, social media, and communications professionals around the world to understand their consumers, influence outcomes and amplify their stories. As the market leader, Cision's award-winning brands and technology enable Marketing and Communications leaders to manage and shape their brands in today's rapidly evolving world. Cision has offices in 24 countries through the Americas, EMEA and APAC, and offers a suite of best-in-class solutions, including PR Newswire, Brandwatch Consumer Research, and CisionOne. To learn more, visit **www.cision.com**, **www.brandwatch.com** and **www.prnewswire.com**.