



How One Public Utility's Small Comms Team is Putting AI to Work

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Presented by
Christopher Cole

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Our Mission

To provide the Northern Kentucky region with reliable and efficient wastewater and stormwater services that protect public health, property and the environment while supporting the economic vitality of our community.



SD1.org

Our Team



We're a small team but we're **fierce**.

SD1 Enterprise Communications consists of a director, a part-time & remote communications specialist/SM guru, and an administrative specialist who somehow finds a way to always keep us moving forward.

I mostly just stay out of Olivia & Krista's way.

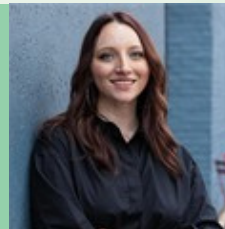


Christopher Cole

Director,
Enterprise Communications

Olivia Backus

Communication Specialist



Krista Salyers

Administrative Specialist

ALL IN

As **artificial intelligence** (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into daily operations, public agencies must evaluate its adoption through a lens of ethical responsibility, efficiency, and transparency.

AI tools such as ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs) have matured to a point where they can deliver measurable value – especially for communication teams – while requiring thoughtful governance.

This paper outlines three high-value, appropriate use cases for AI in public agency communications and highlights essential cautionary principles to ensure safe, ethical use.



USE CASE 1: Public Messaging



Why It Matters:

Many public agencies must communicate consistent, repetitive updates across multiple channels—ranging from service disruptions to policy reminders. AI can support this by drafting initial versions of press releases, website copy, email updates, and social media posts, saving time while increasing consistency.



WHO'S GOT THE TIME???

Public agency communicators are often overwhelmed and understaffed. The strategic use of AI can reduce the time spent on content creation by **as much as 50%**, according to a recent [Databox survey](#).

SD1, has seen an even greater time savings (nearly 80%).

SD1 Enterprise Communications:

AI is currently being used to assist in brainstorming public campaign ideas; writing early drafts of press releases, publications, and digital content; and generating high-quality images and video.

PRO TIP:

Use AI as a first-draft generator. Human editors should always review, localize, and fact-check AI-generated text to ensure tone, accuracy, and relevance to your constituents. Set up templates to maintain brand voice and style.

USE CASE 2:

Knowledge Base



Why It Matters:

Agencies often house vast amounts of historical data, policies, and reports across departments. AI tools can summarize documents or respond to natural language questions with accurate, cross-referenced answers. This enables staff - especially new hires - to quickly get up to speed.



WHERE DID I SAVE THAT???

According to a recent [Cottrell Research study](#), the average employee spends between 1.8 and 3.6 hours per day searching for information.

A Quickbase report released in 2023 found similar results: 70% of employees search as much as 20 hours per week chasing information.

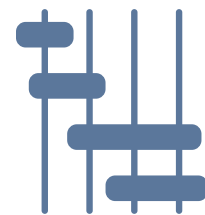
SD1 Enterprise Communications:

SD1 is currently building an AI assistant named “Flo” that will answer common staff questions related to the Employee Handbook; HR policies; District-wide SOPs; the organization’s intranet and website; and other sources.

PRO TIP:

Deploy AI within a secure, organization-approved environment. Integrate internal document repositories into the AI system with proper access controls and audit trails.

USE CASE 3: Employee Engagement



HOW ARE WE DOING???

Gartner reports that organizations are moving away from long, annual employee engagement surveys in exchange more frequent, agile approaches like pulse surveys to better understand employee sentiment.

Many AI-assisted staff engagement tools have built-in sentiment measures.

Why It Matters:

AI-powered sentiment analysis tools can scan employee surveys, email feedback, or suggestion forms to surface trends in morale, concerns, or confusion before they escalate. This empowers HR and communications teams to respond proactively and with targeted messaging.

SD1 Enterprise Communications:

SD1 uses AI tools such as Axios HQ for a weekly staff email called “The Friday Pulse Check,” which asks simply: “How satisfied were you working at SD1 this week?” There is also an opportunity for staff to leave anonymous comments, which SD1 evaluates for general sentiment using AI.

PRO TIP:

Use anonymized, opt-in data where possible. Communicate clearly with staff that AI is being used as a tool to enhance, not monitor, the workplace.

Conclusion

Used thoughtfully*,

AI can amplify the capacity and precision of public agency communications. By focusing on repetitive content drafting, internal knowledge access, and employee engagement analysis—while staying alert to risks—public agencies like SD1 can model responsible innovation while better serving their communities.

*CAUTIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

TRANSPARENCY | Always disclose when content has been AI-assisted, especially in public-facing materials.

DATA PRIVACY | Avoid uploading sensitive, personally identifiable, or legally protected information into open AI models.

BIAS & HALLUCINATION | AI can generate incorrect or biased content. Review outputs carefully and consider cross-verification with trusted sources.

ACCESS CONTROL | Limit who can prompt AI systems within your agency and provide training on safe, ethical use.



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