Boards and AI-Enabled Communication

Idea In Short

Corporate boards should treat artificial intelligence (AI) enabled communication as a governance topic, not just a tool choice. When AI influences what companies say to investors, employees and customers, boards must ensure clarity, accuracy and trust are protected through explicit policies, oversight and culture

Why Boards Must Lean Into AI-Enabled Communication

AI adoption has moved beyond back office experimentation into visible, front stage activities. Investor letters, internal updates and customer messages increasingly pass through or originate from AI systems. In many companies, this shift has happened faster than board oversight, leaving a gap where tools influence tone, content and timing without clear governance. Leading board advisors now argue that AI sits squarely within board responsibility, as it affects strategy, risk and culture together.1

Boards do not need to micromanage individual messages. Their role is to ensure that there is a coherent framework around AI-enabled communication. That framework should cover who owns the rules, how risks are assessed and how the organization learns from mistakes. Without this, companies risk fragmented experimentation where each department interprets "responsible AI" differently, creating inconsistent narratives that confuse stakeholders.

AI-enabled communication also intersects with regulatory expectations. In several sectors, regulators now expect transparency when automated systems affect customer outcomes or information flows. Boards must ensure management understands these expectations and builds disclosure practices that keep the firm ahead of inquiries rather than reacting only when concerns surface.

A Single Source of Truth With Tailored Narratives

One practical insight from AI communication practitioners is the tension between consistency and relevance. Every stakeholder group should receive the same core facts about the company's AI programs, yet each audience needs those facts framed differently. Boards can help management resolve this tension by insisting on a single source of truth document that sets out the factual narrative, then tailoring emphasis for investors, employees and customers.2

For investors, the narrative should explain strategic rationale, capital allocation, governance mechanisms and measurable outcomes. For employees, it should focus on role impact, support and expectations. For customers, it should clarify where AI appears in their experience and what protections exist. All of these stories should derive from the same factual base, which reduces the risk that AI-generated or AI-assisted content drifts into inconsistent territory.

Boards can ask management to maintain an audience matrix that lists which stakeholders need which elements of the narrative, in what format and at what frequency. AI tools can help produce tailored versions, but the underlying facts and framing rules must be human-led. This "single source, multiple views" model keeps communication aligned while recognizing that one generic statement about AI will rarely satisfy diverse groups.

Investor Communication: Specific Over Slogan

Investors increasingly ask pointed questions about AI investment, governance and workforce impact. Generic statements about "responsible AI" carry low credibility. Boards should push for investor communication that is specific and evidenced, particularly when AI touches core business models or large capital programs.3

Good investor narratives about AI-enabled communication describe where and how AI supports content creation, risk monitoring, or customer engagement. They explain controls and review processes, not only ambition. They link AI use to concrete outcomes, such as reduced error rates or faster response times and they acknowledge limitations where tools remain experimental.

Boards can make specificity a norm by asking simple but direct questions: "Which communications channels currently involve AI?" "What verification steps exist?" "Which metrics show that these tools are helping rather than hurting?" When management answers these questions clearly, investor materials tend to improve as well.

Employee and Manager Communication: Sequence Matters

AI changes how work and communication feel inside organizations. Boards should pay attention to how AI-related messages reach managers and employees, especially when job content or evaluation metrics evolve. One practical rule from AI change advisors is that manager communication must precede employee communication. When managers see employee messages at the same time as their teams, they cannot answer questions, which damages trust in both leadership and AI initiatives.4

Boards can ask management whether managers receive advance briefings that include likely questions and approved answers. They can also inquire how AI tools are used to segment employee communication by role. People whose work will change because of AI need more detail than those whose roles remain mostly unaffected. A generic "AI will support your work" message is not enough.

In this context, AI-enabled communication can help or harm. Automated internal messages may scale information quickly, but careless use can produce tone deaf statements or vague reassurances. Boards should ensure that any AI-assisted employee messaging passes through human review that checks clarity, accuracy and psychological impact before distribution.

Customer and Regulator Messaging: Transparency and Specificity

Customer communication about AI is no longer simply a trust-building option; in many jurisdictions it is a regulatory expectation. Customers must know when automated systems influence decisions or responses. Boards should ask how management discloses AI involvement in customer journeys and whether those disclosures are specific enough to be meaningful.

For example, saying "We use AI" in terms and conditions has limited value. More useful is a clear line such as "This response was prepared with AI assistance and reviewed by our team" where relevant. This kind of statement helps customers understand the nature of interaction and sets realistic expectations about system and human roles.

Regulators, meanwhile, expect proactive engagement on AI governance. Boards should oversee a plan for regular dialogue with relevant authorities about the firm's AI policies, especially where communication plays a role in customer protection, market fairness, or data use. Waiting for inquiries before explaining AI practices tends to create defensive interactions. Proactive, specific discussion often leads to better relationships and fewer surprises.

Building Board-Level AI Communication Fluency

Effective oversight of AI-enabled communication requires board-level fluency, not deep technical expertise. Directors need enough understanding to ask focused questions and to recognize when answers sound too generic. Several governance groups now recommend that boards integrate AI literacy into ongoing education and incorporate AI oversight into committee charters rather than treating it as occasional news.5

Boards can start by mapping where AI currently touches communication: investor documents, internal platforms, customer support, or marketing. They can then assign committee responsibilities so that no area falls between gaps. Risk committees might oversee accuracy and bias controls, while governance committees examine narrative consistency and ethical implications.

Finally, boards should set expectations for management about how AI communication failures will be surfaced and addressed. Near misses and incidents, such as incorrect AI-generated customer emails, should appear in board reports alongside cyber and operational events. This practice signals that AI-enabled communication sits within the company's control system, not outside it as a convenient experiment.

- 1Governance of AI: A Critical Imperative for Today's Boards
- 2How to Communicate AI Change to Different Stakeholder Groups
- 3AI and the Role of the Board of Directors
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- 5AI Governance: A Guide for Boards, Risk and Audit Leaders

Summary

Boards that frame AI-enabled communication as part of strategy and risk oversight can harness its benefits while guarding against errors, tone mismatches and trust erosion across stakeholder groups