

# WHAT TO READ NEXT: FROM AI TO PERSUASION

*REVIEWERS: BERND PÜTTER, HOCHTIEF; MATT RAGAS, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY & LAURENT TURPAULT, ESSEDI*

# WHAT TO READ NEXT: FROM AI TO PERSUASION

REVIEWERS: BERND PÜTTER, HOCHTIEF; MATT RAGAS, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY & LAURENT TURPAULT, ESSENDI



Two Chief Communication Officers of global companies (Bernd Pütter, Hochtief, and Laurent Turpault, Essendi) and a renowned professor (Matt Ragas, DePaul University) review a selection of inspiring books. They share their key insights and takeaways, as well as who they think would benefit most from reading them.



**Sutherland, K. (2025).** Artificial intelligence for strategic communication. Springer nature singapore. 486 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2575-8>

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY KAREN SUTHERLAND (BERND PÜTTER)

Karen Sutherland teaches public relations at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. In her book, she brings together different perspectives on the topic of AI: those of academics, practitioners, and developers, while also reflecting international diversity. Her goal is to provide a practical, data-driven framework for the use of AI in strategic communication and thus close a research gap.

The book addresses three central research questions that arise from an analysis of AI's historical context and its application in strategic communication, as well as from a comprehensive literature review:

- > What are the attitudes and perceptions towards the use and impact of AI in strategic communication?
- > How is AI currently used in strategic communication?
- > What are the attitudes and perceptions about the future role and impact of AI in strategic communication?

The research is based on a comprehensive literature review, 41 semi-structured interviews with academics and practitioners from eight countries, and an online survey with 400 communication professionals from Australia, the UK, and the US.

The chapter structure is as follows:

- > **Part I:** Foundations and theories of AI in strategic communication (definition, history, ethical challenges).
- > **Part II:** Integration of AI in practice (strategy development, content creation, text, image, video and audio tools, fact-checking, editing, evaluation).
- > **Part III:** Future perspectives, summary of research findings, model for practice, and resource list.

### **Most useful insights**

The chapters are clearly written and accessible. The interviewees articulate a wide range of issues – including ethical and legal concerns, hate speech, data protection and security, and copyright. The author outlines measures for addressing these challenges, offering a useful guide for practitioners in organizational settings.

The last section of the book deals with the future development of AI in the field of strategic communication. It is emphasized that the rapid development of AI makes predictions difficult, but a structured overview of the expected evolutionary stages of AI is nevertheless provided. AI is seen as a tool that complements, but does not replace, human skills – especially in creative, ethical, and strategic areas.

### **Who will benefit most from this book**

I cannot judge the book's value for the communication science community, having worked in professional communication management for too long. That said, the overview of the research situation and the approach to the topic are conclusive, and the findings are explained clearly and coherently. As a practical textbook for students or as supplemental reading for corporate communicators, the book has limited utility. Detailed information on the pros and cons of specific AI applications can be found quicker elsewhere.

However, I do think that the book's relevance for communication managers in companies and institutions will extend into the future. As operational managers gain the ability to perform many communication tasks themselves using AI, communication departments will face increasing pressure to demonstrate their distinct value and sharpen their strategic focus. The book provides guidance for communication professionals in navigating the various stages of AI development.



**Lund, A. K., & Refshauge, M. (2024).** Mastering corporate communication: A modern guidebook for future-fit strategies, tools and skills. Springer nature switzerland. 239 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50232-3>

## MASTERING CORPORATE COMMUNICATION BY LUND AND REFSHAUGE (MATT RAGAS)

This timely “pracademic” (practitioner-academic) collaboration provides an important overview of contemporary subjects shaping the future of corporate communication. The themes addressed range from trust building with stakeholders and the demands facing communication today to how professional communicators can help manage change and crises. As the authors deftly explain in the introduction, through the incorporation of case studies, this book provides “real insight into the engine room of a large organization’s communication function.” One of the co-authors, Mette Refshauge, serves as a communications director for Maersk, the shipping and logistics giant with operations spanning 130 countries and more than 100,000 employees. The other co-author, Anne Katrine Lund holds a PhD in rhetoric and is a strategic advisor to organizations.

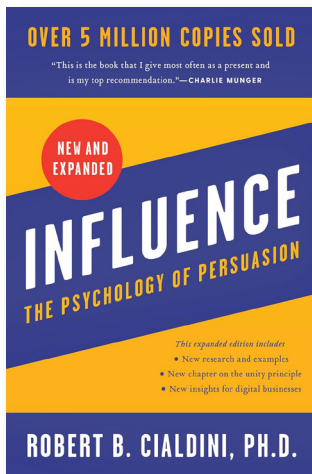
### Most useful insights

Interviews with and short profiles of top academic researchers (e.g., Jim Grunig, Bob Heath, Chiara Valentini), which are incorporated into the contents of each chapter, help introduce the work of these scholars to a broader audience. These interviews and profiles also help to show the potential practical application of theoretical findings. The final chapter on “Skills of the Future” provides valuable space for reflection on the future of the profession and the ongoing competency development needed to help elevate the function’s contributions.

I found myself wishing there was a searchable index at the end of the book so I could look up key terms. For example, in the US, the world’s largest economy, there have recently been so-called “DEI rollbacks” and a public de-emphasis on ESG performance by some companies. This book includes a useful chapter on corporate citizenship, and CEO activism is briefly addressed. But I would like to see more nuanced thinking around navigating corporate citizenship in various global markets as the sociopolitical winds sometimes shift notably, such as in the US currently.

### Who will benefit most from this book

This book will benefit a range of corporate and professional communication professionals, ranging from recent graduates to mid-career professionals working on the communication teams of large organizations, such as multinational corporations. Educators should consider adopting this book for graduate level courses within corporate communication and related subjects. This book could also be used as a supplement in corporate learning and development programs.



**Cialdini, R. B. (2021).** Influence: the psychology of persuasion (New and Expanded). Harper Business. 592 pages. ISBN 978-0-06-313689-2

## INFLUENCE – THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION BY ROBERT B. CIALDINI (LAURENT TURPAULT)

As its title suggests, Influence is about persuasion, but more precisely, about the psychological levers that make people say “yes.” Robert Cialdini’s work lies in decoding the hidden mechanisms behind human behavior, which often guide decisions without our conscious awareness.

Actually, the book itself uses one of the very principles it describes: authority. The cover announces that more than five million copies have been sold. I think this is a classic example of how perceived authority (and social proof) can nudge us into action. After all, how could one not read what five million others have deemed valuable?

What makes Influence powerful is its universality. Cialdini does not specifically refer to communication technologies, algorithms, or even AI (which was not at all at the stage it is today when this book was published for the first time). He roots his analysis in timeless human psychology: behaviors that have shaped our interactions since the dawn of social life. For communications professionals, that perspective is refreshing. It strips persuasion back to its essence: understanding what truly moves people.

### Most useful insights

When I closed the book, the first thing that came to mind was the list of the seven principles of influence: reciprocity, liking, social proof, authority, scarcity, commitment and consistency, and unity. Saying that is no spoiler as the value is not in the list itself, but in how Cialdini brings each to life through stories and examples that stick.

I am naturally someone who likes to get the big picture before diving into details. And what struck me most was Cialdini’s gift for illustration. He anchors each principle in human situations, with anecdotes and sometimes humor. For instance, he uses a Dennis the Menace comic strip to explain reciprocity – the idea that when someone gives us something (even something small), we feel an urge to give back more. As he shows, “an individual often agrees to a request for a substantially larger favor than the one he or she received.” You read that and think: Yes, that’s exactly how it works in real life, and often without us realizing it.

For someone working in corporate communication, these insights resonate. Influence is at the heart of what we do: building trust and inspiring action. Cialdini’s principles are not distant academic theories; they are tools, guiding how we craft messages, position leaders, and design campaigns. The book helped me to understand influence not only as something we use, but also as something we must detect. Because being aware of the levers that influence others also means recognizing when they are being used on us.

And I must say, discovering my own “Dennis the Menace” moments along the way was both entertaining and enlightening.

### Who will benefit most from this book

Influence has never been a more relevant concept than today. It has evolved from a psychological phenomenon into an industry (think influencers, algorithms, and even AI-generated personalities). Yet, as Cialdini reminds us, influence is far from new. Wherever there is life, there is influence. The author even draws on examples from the animal kingdom to show how social behavior shapes action.

This makes the book valuable reading for a wide audience: negotiators, marketers, public affairs professionals, and anyone seeking to build trust or drive action. For those in corporate communication, it provides a framework for understanding

the emotional and cognitive levers behind reputation, credibility, and engagement. It helps refine both content and channel strategy, reminding us, for instance, that authority and social proof can be powerful tools in digital campaigns where repetition and trust matter.

In that perspective, *Influence* is the right complement to technical guides like *The Art of Negotiation*. One gives you the tools of persuasion; the other teaches you when and why to use them.

In a world of constant notifications, instant content, and shrinking attention spans, reading a book like this feels almost countercultural. It's not a novel, not a business manual, but something in between, a pause for reflection. And that pause, in Cialdini's company, turns out to be an excellent investment.

## REVIEWERS



**DR. BERND PÜTTER** is Senior Vice President Corporate Communications and Public Affairs at Hochtief Group, Essen, Germany. The communications scientist has been with Hochtief, one of the world's leading infrastructure companies with revenues exceeding €33 billion, for over 25 years. He is responsible for group-wide communications and public affairs. Before joining Hochtief, he worked as a journalist and consultant. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bernd-pütter-854514192>



**DR. MATT RAGAS** is a tenured professor and director of graduate studies in the College of Communication at DePaul University, Chicago, USA. He is an award-winning teacher, researcher, and faculty advisor, and co-author of several books with colleague Ron Culp, most recently *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook* (Emerald, 2024). Their publications are used by universities and communication teams worldwide. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mattragas>



**LAURENT TURPAULT** is Senior Vice President Communications and Public Affairs at Essendi (formerly AccorInvest), Paris, France. A senior communications leader with broad experience across FMCG and services, he previously held leadership roles at Heineken, Bacardi-Martini, and The Coca-Cola Company. An HEC Paris EMBA graduate, he built and now leads Essendi's communications and public affairs function, positioning the company as a leading hotel owner and operator in Europe. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laurentturpault>