Lords, ladies and gentlemen, MICA and Guild members, award finalists and other industry friends – good evening.

Four-year-old MICA salutes the Guild’s 80-year service to motoring journalism. Congratulations on passing such a significant landmark.

In comparison to 80 years, automotive communicators are relatively newly served by MICA but we too have been preoccupied by AI.

Simon (Harris, GOMW.co.uk chair) tantalisingly suggested that a bot may have ghost written his speech. Some of mine has been, so it will be for you to decide if man or machine’s speech writing is better. Let’s start with my effort:

We’ve had access to consumer AI for exactly two years now. The technology has been around for decades but Chat GPT was released publicly in November 2022, followed by Perplexity and Gemini shortly after.

These Large Language Models generate written responses to prompts as the models learn connections and patterns in the internet sea of data.

We’ve all been coming to grips with these new tools, working out their true potential and pitfalls.

Which is why one of MICA’s training themes of 2024 was the impact of AI on automotive communications, presented with one of our founder members, Torque Agency Group. How can we use AI wisely, and has it the potential to replace us in the future, were the questions asked.

In short, its select and discerning deployment does have a role, but not yet the ability to take over. We are reprieved!

We saw computer intelligence organise a diary to complete tasks, collate media monitoring of 200 items of coverage, and provide ideas for a photo brief. In other words, admin, analysis and ideation are prime areas for AI.

None of these were time-saving shortcuts. The knowledge needed to prompt and refine AI output took Torque a year to build. The novice can’t enter a prompt and extract a finished piece of work. A human communicator has to take over critiquing and refining raw output by honing the prompts and sub-editing.

To Simon’s point, this is about introducing our craft, and bringing a personal connection. For as long as people bring more value than they’re paid to edit the bots, we have the upper hand.

So communications admin, analysis and new ideas are perfectly deliverable by AI. But what can’t be, to make us communicators feel invaluable?

• It falls down on originality of language and tone, on hitting the authentic note of the publisher or author.

• It's unwise to input and lose control of sensitive information, which makes up all news pre-embargo, so no AI-written releases.

• And it's oblivious to the potential reputational damage arising from confidential facts and figures circulating in a large language model, following mishandling by an over-enthusiastic operator or mistaken use of business-critical material.

What does the future hold for AI in communications?
There’s valid use for defined audiences, among dealers or other partners working within a brand, but much more limited publicly. For customers and prospects who we want to impress with a consistent tone – while staying the right side of the law, the Advertising Standards Authority or other scrutineers – AI is too crude.

I said earlier that the technology has been in specialised use for decades. Its mass availability two years ago made it mainstream.

At auto communication and translation specialists Imprimatur, where I now have the pleasure of working, machine translation was piloted in the 1990s. Today the machine’s AI-powered and self-sufficient, based on its memory how common words and phrases are translated, and the client’s corporate dictionary settling style queries. For other projects, human editing, in-market translators and other expert quality checks need adding. Back to a personal connection and skills having a role where required.

For the rest of this decade, as MICA heads to 10 years old, I’d like to think that man and machine can be in balance. For the turn of the century, when the Guild is 160, the real me isn’t so sure…

This virtual me will now deliver AI’s light-hearted summary. Remember what I said about original language and hitting an authentic note?

“We’ve revved our engines tonight, celebrating communications which are smoother than a Rolls Royce’s ride. Let’s shift gears to talk about our latest co-driver, AI.

“AI hit the mainstream in 2022, and while it’s eager to help, it’s no Lewis Hamilton behind the wheel. Sure, it can handle admin and suggest story ideas — think of it as a capable intern who never sleeps but needs a lot of supervision. AI is like tuning a classic engine: it takes expertise, patience, and a willingness to get your hands dirty.

“AI can’t yet match a skilled writer or the creativity to make stories sing. Let’s be honest, would you trust an algorithm with sensitive data? That’s like handing a teenager the keys to a Ferrari — it’s bound to end in tears. So, while AI is useful, it’s not ready to steal the limelight,” admitted Chat GPT.

To close, MICA’s “AI for automotive communications” webinar is available in the members’ area of Mica.org.uk. Please see our insert in tonight’s programme for the full download on MICA.

MICA congratulates all award entrants on the considerable achievement of being shortlisted. Good luck in the final round announced shortly.

Thank you and have a good night.

**Notes**

 for whom language has to be well pitched and polished accordingly
Real-time conversations for further info, and data processing for claims to be decided
Where it’s clunky, only a matter of time
Understand to use for benefit of our employers, clients, teams and ourselves

Useful for admin overload – automate to rebalance routine vs fresh human-exclusive input
 gut feel – validate ideas based on experience & creative instincts with data

**How Torque uses AI** (22:24 time code)Research (Perplexity)
Ideation
Strategy & planning
Content creation
Analysis & admin (coverage analysis, translations, minuting to improve productivity, save time & reduce feelings of overwhelm as we jump from task to task)
Image creation

 **AI in communications**“I want AI to do my laundry and dishes so that I can paint and write.
Not for AI to do my art and writing, so that I can do laundry and wash up.”
Joanna Maciejewska

Mark Read, WPP CEO, on AI in The Times Oct 24: WPP investing heavily strengthening AI capability. “AI will be fundamental to our future as a company,” he said. “It enables us to come up with creative ideas more quickly to find insights in the market. It allows us to produce more work more quickly for clients and prove the relevance and targeting of our media plans.”

However, he admitted there were some concerns for the wider industry. “We are worried about fakes and deep fakes and the potential for AI to lead to more fraud. Like any new technology, there’s both potential and also risk.”

LI: almost 80% of talent dev’ment leaders believe adopting AI is crucial for remaining competitive

[AT launched Co-driver suite of dealer solutions powered by AL and machine learning]

Approach of MICA webinar: to try to gain an understanding how it can work for application to your own expertise. Chat 3.5 launch transformative for industry and Torque, beginning of last year. Prompt engineering accreditation for whole team, and specialists (in AI-generated images, media monitoring analysis). Garbage in/garbage out = design accurate and proficient prompts for reliable outputs: define role (tell LLM who it is, how you are, and what it’s to do), give context, set clear task, be specific, delineate, iterate (go back and work with tool to make better).
Comms rarely focused on one thing throughout day, being able to understand and prioritise

[ There can be a mismatch between seniors’ hopes for AI’s efficiency impact on their business and the realities of its implementation: <https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/learning-and-development/ai-can-make-professionals-more-productive?trk=eml-mktg-lts-acq-202410-global-ai-productivity-en-a&src=e-eml&mcid=7252388435615789056&veh=LTS_EML_ACQ_202410_GLOBAL_AI_Productivity_EN_A> ]