How Managers Perceive Al-Assisted Conversational Training for Workplace Communication

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SAIL Research Areas

- Uncovering Language Patterns
- Understanding the Real-World Impact of Language
- Designing Human-Centered AI Language Technologies

86% of leaders

believe AI can help improve leadership¹

¹Google & Harris Poll (2024)



Al already influences workplace communication

Message augmentation (e.g., email autocomplete, smart replies in message applications, etc.) 2,3



Leadership communication is more than polished text⁴

Requires adaptation, confidence, and navigating difficult conversations

¹Google & Harris Poll (2024) ²Pang et al. (2025) ³Jakesch et al. (2019) ⁴Charlier et al. (2016)

Leaders develop communication skills through trial and error^{1,2}

- Limited access to mentorship and personalized coaching³
- Expensive leadership training programs^{4,5}

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?

Can AI be a training tool, not just a writing assistant?

¹McCall (2004) ²Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) ³Scandura et al. (2004) ⁴Lacerenza et al. (2017) ⁵Rashkin et al. (2019)

Research questions

1

What communication challenges do managers face in their workplace context and how do they currently address them?

2

How do managers
conceptualize the role of AI in
communication training, and
what expectations or concerns
do they have about AI-driven
training tools?

Method

Study Protocol

Semi-structured interviews with 17 managers



Military



Academia



Industry

1

Management & Training Background

2

User Interaction with Functional Probe

l

Post-Interaction Reflection

System

CommCoach

Functional probe designed to help our preliminary understanding of Al-assisted leadership communication training systems



Scenario-based Al role-play

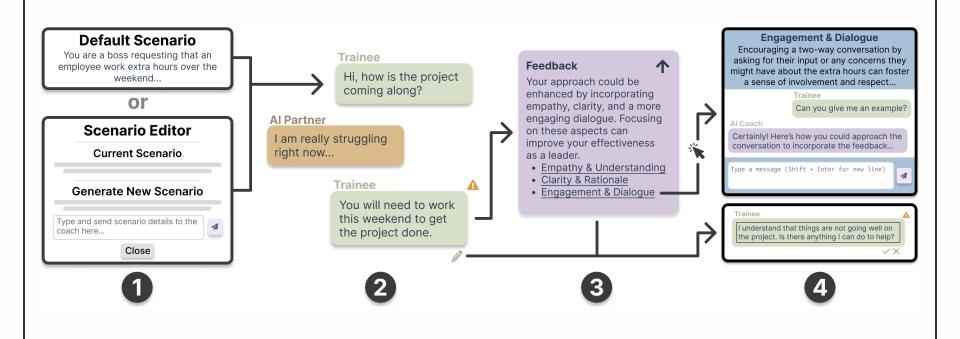


Real-time feedback



Structured reflection & coaching

System Flow



CommCoach



Feedback and Reflection

Scenario

You are a boss requesting that an employee, Taylor, work extra hours over the weekend to complete the XYZ project before a critical deadline. They are the only person that can do the job, and their progress has been substandard.



Type a message (Shift + Enter for new line)





User Input

Diverse Styles Humor, storytelling, questioning, etc.

Communication Modality

Face-to-face, email, messaging, etc.

Communication Barriers

Empathy vs. directness, discomfort with conflict, emotional reactions

System Output

Managing Conversation Length

Mechanisms to detect and signal conversation completion

Reflection Opportunities

Dialogic reflection with AI coach, chat branching, session flagging

Findings

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Contextual Interpreter

Adapting to User History

Al responses align with user tendencies

Conversational Intent

Preventing user misinterpretation

Partner Simulation

Emotional Realism

Cooperative, confrontational, reserved, etc.

Bias Concerns

Introducing personas (demographics, emotions, etc.) can reinforce social bias

Adaptive Difficulty

Adjustable interactions for progressive training

Feedback Module

Role-Specific

Feedback addresses specific supervisory challenges

Timing

Immediate or post-hoc

System Output

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Human-Al Teaming

Al as a Supplement

enhance, not replace, human expertise in training

Collaborative Feedback

Al coaching serves as a tool to Al provided feedback reviewed and discussed collectively with peers and mentors

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Organizational Leadership Frameworks **Objectives &**

Feedback grounded in

established leadership models Outcomes and organizational competencies

Clear Training Objectives

Structured goals grounded in organizational objectives

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Conclusion

Al has the potential to democratize leadership training

- Key considerations
 - Balancing bias & fairness when providing feedback
 - Ensuring that Al adapts to diverse users
 - Upholding data privacy & preventing surveillance
 - Balancing automation with human oversight

Thank you!