Episode #149: The Power of Generative AI to Transform Meetings

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host
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Hello and welcome to another episode of the Working Conversations podcast, where we discuss all things leadership, business communication, and trends in organizational life. I'm your host, Dr. Janel Anderson.

Imagine showing up to a meeting late and instead of wondering what you missed, or worse yet, having the meeting facilitator catch you up on the 10 minutes that you missed. The meeting's generative AI bot catches you up as soon as you enter that online meeting room, sharing all the details that are most relevant to you, including Amy and marketing's AI role when Rachel in accounting said that she was going over budget on the latest campaign. Sounds futuristic? Well, one of my predictions for 2024 is that generative AI is going to revolutionize how we do online meetings. This scenario is not too far away, and we're diving into that today on the podcast.

Now, all the main meeting and collaboration players are getting in on using generative AI in their platforms. While Slack, Trello, Asana, and a host of other project management and collaboration tools are also incorporating generative AI features, I'll keep this discussion focused on meeting platforms where people meet in real time to get work done, typically across geographic locations and perhaps time zones.

Even though some project management tools are adding features where people can jump into a quick meeting room, I'm concentrating on some of the main players. The platforms we're thinking about here include Zoom, WebEx Meetings, GoToMeeting, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. As a side note, I'll keep this as platform-agnostic as possible, not mentioning specific platform names when discussing features, as I don't know which platform you use the most. I do know that once a feature is rolled out in one platform, others will be quick to catch up. So, I'll mostly be calling out features by platform only when necessary.

Now, Zoom and other platforms are already enhancing your visual appearance, giving you a clearer complexion, pinker lips, or whiter teeth. This isn't much different from putting cat ears and whiskers as an overlay, a capability that's been around for years. Your meeting platform might also prompt you that there are five minutes left in the scheduled meeting time, but this is more of a notification than an AI feature. While these

enhancements may make you more comfortable having your camera on, they don't qualitatively impact meeting outcomes.

Generative AI, however, can take things to the next level. It can analyze text-based portions of the meeting, including real-time transcripts for closed captioning or later reference. This encompasses chat messages, poll questions, meeting agendas, uploaded documents, and pre-meeting emails. Large language models can then distill meeting content, action items, volunteers, deadlines, and more. In an ideal scenario, generative AI becomes your best secretary, taking exceptionally detailed notes without error or omission.

But it doesn't stop there. Generative AI can analyze trends over a series of meetings, providing insights into team progress or issues. For example, it might notify a project manager if a team isn't making sufficient progress. Conversely, it can highlight your exceptional meeting facilitation skills over several meetings, earning you recognition or incentives.

Generative AI can also analyze real-time media models, considering speech patterns, tone of voice, volume, pacing, facial expressions, reactions, and gestures like raising your hand. Google Meet, for instance, has a feature where raising your hand physically activates the software's raise hand function, alerting the facilitator.

The analysis of subtle cues in meetings, beyond just raising hands, gives AI a significant advantage over language models alone. It can provide video highlights, meeting transcriptions with timestamps, and more. Additionally, generative AI can enhance audio and video quality when bandwidth is lacking, filling in gaps for a seamless experience.

However, there are concerns. Your gestures, expressions, or reactions become part of the meeting record, raising questions about privacy and emotional labor. The responsible and ethical use of generative AI is crucial, considering the potential for employee monitoring to reach new levels.

Let's delve into some exciting features that generative AI is bringing to meetings:

Meeting Summary: Ideal for those who missed the meeting, providing a CliffsNotes version with important video clips and action item summaries. Microsoft's Copilot feature offers a key points summary.

Meeting Catch Up: Similar to Meeting Summary but designed for those joining midway. It helps you catch up quickly without asking the facilitator for a recap.

What Didn't Get Addressed: AI identifies unresolved questions at the end or towards the end of the meeting, based on a well-written agenda.

Gestures: Features like Google Meet's raise hand function, enhancing participant interaction.

Bandwidth Enhancements: AI improves visual and audio quality when network packets are lost, overcoming issues with poor Wi-Fi or low processing speed.

As this landscape evolves rapidly, I'll be keeping you updated on new features throughout the year. If you come across features you'd like me to address from technical, sociological, or ethical perspectives, reach out via email or social media.

Generative AI has the potential to transform how we conduct meetings, but its effective use requires careful consideration of its impact. Remember, the future of work isn't just about technology; it's about values, communities, and sustainable growth. Keep exploring, innovating, and envisioning the remarkable possibilities ahead.

As always, stay curious, stay informed, and stay ahead of the curve. Tune in next Monday for another insightful exploration of the trends shaping our professional world. If you're enjoying this content on YouTube, hit the subscribe button and the notification

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Until next time, be well, my friends.