

# 4 communication sweet spots for 2024

 By Cheryl Reddy

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When Rick Springfield belted out the lyrics “We all need human touch” in his 1983 jame, Human Touch, tackling the tech scene of the time, he wasn’t just crooning about gadgets and gizmos. He was tapping into that universal craving we all have – yearning to connect and dive into some good old-fashioned, genuine interactions.



Cheryl Reddy is the CEO of Eclipse Communications. Source: Supplied.

## 1. AI versus the human connection

In an era of AI and machine learning taking centre stage, this yearning for human connection is cranking up a notch. Fast forward to 2024, businesses find themselves in a balancing act, juggling between a tech-driven universe and a deep desire for that authentic human touch.

As AI becomes the cool kid on the marketing block, consumers are on the lookout for brands that aren’t just data points and algorithms, but are real, trustworthy and relatable. According to the wise minds at Gartner, by 2027, some 20% of brands will be waving the “No AI Here” flag as unique selling points.

The same report suggests that by 2026, 60% of CMOs will adopt measures such as content authenticity technology, enhanced monitoring and brand-endorsed user-generated content to protect their brands from widespread deception unleashed by GenAI.

There’s no doubt then that authenticity is key to building brands and winning consumers’ trust. Brands that succeed in doing this will set themselves apart from their competitors and engender greater brand-love.

## 2. Social media a moving target

Brands have ditched their reservations and embraced social media platforms as VIP players in their communications channel matrix. It’s not just about going digital – it’s about keeping content snazzy to match audience cravings. But some platforms might be sweating bullets and there could be a struggle to keep the new generations entertained.

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Here in South Africa, TikTok is having a moment, morphing into a search engine and ditching the follower race for emotion-stirring creativity. Yet, the drama of misinformation and AI twists is muddying the social media waters. Gartner's report suggests that by 2025, half of consumers might put major platforms on a diet due to perceived quality dip.

### 3. Influencer partnerships hold power

Let's talk niche influencer partnerships. This will continue to play a strong role in 2024, allowing brands to extend their reach by leveraging the creativity and popularity of relevant influencers. The trick is to find influencers who are properly aligned with particular brands and who have the right amount of integrity, credibility and followers to make an impact. Influencer partnerships are great for promoting brand conversations and building community. They do, however, need to be underpinned by trust; and influencers that brands choose to collaborate with should be good at creating authentic and unique content.

### 4. To use or not to use AI-generated content?

AI is increasing at a compound annual growth rate of close to 40% globally, with no signs of abating, according to Grand View Research,. Once again, Gartner predicts that by 2026, majority of creatives will use GenAI on a daily basis.

While AI can complete more mundane design tasks, such as colour-correction, image resizing and font selection, creatives are afforded more time to spend on strategic work and creative ideation. The same goes for writers, where AI may be able to churn out passable content, but those of us who have an eye for detail will be able to spot a machine versus human from a mile away.

So, will AI turn out to be the hero or the villain of 2024? Probably neither – AI that is properly harnessed to enhance brand stories and promote conversations can be a helpful tool for the industry and brands. Users just need to make sure they have checks and balances in place to be alert to misinformation.

It should also be balanced with measures aimed at making more personal and meaningful connections with audiences. If not, brands will risk losing them.

### ABOUT CHERYL REDDY

Cheryl Reddy is CEO at Eclipse Communications, and is responsible for the agency's strategic direction and to continuously achieve its mandate of people, client and agency growth across the full spectrum of services and business units in the agency's four offices in South Africa.

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