

***Nathan, what a great presentation. I love the focus on relationships. I think my unease with AI is that I think it will be very, very good at imitating human voice and emotion, and that we'll be using it more and more to "project humanity" at our donors. Part of me worries we'll lose the essential element of human-to-human contact the more we use AI. Maybe I am just another luddite like your JD-PhD friend... What are your thoughts?***

Thank you for your thoughtful question. You're not a Luddite—you're a realist with a deep understanding of what makes philanthropy meaningful. I share your concern, and I think it's one of the most important conversations we can have about AI in fundraising.

The reality is, AI *will* become increasingly proficient at mimicking human voice, emotion, and even the nuances of empathy. And if we're not careful, we may be tempted to let it *stand in* for human relationships rather than *enhance* them. But here's the thing: AI doesn't *feel*—it doesn't love, it doesn't care, and it certainly doesn't experience the intrinsic reward of generosity.

This is why I always emphasize that AI should be seen as an *amplifier* of humanity, not a *replacement* for it. It should help us rediscover the lost art of connection, not automate it out of existence. The real risk isn't AI itself—it's how we choose to use it. If we see it as a shortcut to transactional engagement rather than a bridge to deeper, more intentional relationships, then yes, we will lose something essential.

The question we should ask ourselves isn't, "*How much of donor engagement can AI take over?*" but rather, "*How can AI help us be more present, more insightful, and more deeply connected to those who share our mission?*" If we use it responsibly—freeing up time for authentic human interaction, illuminating hidden patterns of generosity, and ensuring that every donor feels seen and valued—then AI isn't a threat to relationships; it's a tool to strengthen them.

So, no, you're not a Luddite. You're a guardian of what truly matters. And that's precisely the mindset we need as we shape the future of philanthropy in an algorithmic world.

*"What is the most practical usage of AI for fundraisers in their day to day tasks?"*

The most practical use of AI for fundraisers isn't about replacing human relationships—it's about *removing friction* so we can spend more time building them. AI excels at automating repetitive tasks, surfacing insights we might otherwise miss, and personalizing engagement at scale.

For day-to-day tasks, here are three areas where AI is already making a measurable impact:

1. **Prioritization & Prospecting** – AI can analyze vast amounts of donor data to help fundraisers focus on *who* to reach out to and *when*. Instead of working from static wealth screening lists, AI-driven predictive modeling can identify donors with both *capacity* and *affinity*, allowing fundraisers to spend more time building meaningful relationships with the right people. This is the work that I lead at DonorSearch AI with the largest

2. **Personalized Outreach & Donor Engagement** – AI-powered tools like email generators and chat assistants can help fundraisers craft tailored messages in seconds. But the real power isn't in automation—it's in augmentation. AI can suggest language based on a donor's history and preferences, but the fundraiser's role is to *humanize* it, ensuring that every message feels authentic and relational rather than robotic.
3. **Grant Writing & Administrative Tasks** – AI can dramatically speed up research, summarization, and even first drafts of grant proposals and reports. It won't replace the strategic storytelling and nuance required to make a compelling case, but it can remove hours of tedious work, allowing fundraisers to focus on strategy and relationships rather than formatting documents.

At its best, AI isn't about *doing fundraising for us*—it's about giving us back the time and clarity to be *more human* in our work. If used responsibly, AI can shift us from being transactional to transformational, helping us forge deeper, more intentional connections with donors in a way that scales without losing authenticity.

So the real question isn't *how much can AI do*, but *how much more can we do, with AI as our partner?*

For your ongoing AI education, I'd encourage you to subscribe to the Fundraising.AI podcast ([Spotify](#), [Apple](#)) and also watch a bunch of [videos](#) on the Fundraising.AI website. Last but not least, follow me on [LinkedIn](#) and let me know if I can ever be helpful!