

Apply Your “HI” (Human Intelligence) to ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Artificial intelligence continues to dominate headlines, often framed as either a cure-all or a threat to jobs. At MSAE25, *Apply Your “HI” (Human Intelligence) to Artificial Intelligence* cut through the noise with a grounded, practical perspective. Vanessa Dennison, CAE, CBAP, challenged association leaders to view AI not as a replacement for people—but as a tool that amplifies human judgment, creativity, and efficiency.

Drawing on her work helping associations move from zero AI use to fully developed strategies, Dennison emphasized that AI adoption should look familiar. Like an AMS or LMS, AI is simply another technology—one that requires policies, training, and intentional use to deliver value.

Learning AI Through Collaboration and Conversation

Making her debut at MSAE25, Dennison intentionally designed the session to be interactive. Attendees were encouraged to sit together, share experiences, and build on one another’s ideas. That collaboration, she noted, mirrors how AI itself is best learned.

[AI] helps professionals do more with limited resources, relieves cognitive overload, and supports upskilling without eliminating roles.

Hearing how peers use AI sparks imagination, creating an upward spiral of innovation. In associations—where professionals are often stretched thin—learning from one another accelerates adoption and helps teams move past hesitation toward experimentation.

Addressing the Myths: AI as Partner, Not Replacement

Dennison addressed a common concern head-on: fear. Despite widespread hype, AI is not replacing association professionals. In fact, associations are among the most AI-resistant industries—not because AI lacks value, but because mission-driven work demands trust, nuance, and judgment.

AI, Dennison explained, works best as a partner. It helps professionals do more with limited resources, relieves cognitive overload, and supports upskilling without eliminating roles. When applied strategically, AI enhances—not erodes—the human side of association work.

From Prompts to Possibilities

A live demonstration of AI “prompting recipes” showed how combining context, constraints, and clear objectives dramatically improves results. Dennison encouraged attendees to think beyond basic prompts and instead focus on how they ask questions.

At the same time, she cautioned against forcing AI into every task. One of the most important AI skills, she noted, is knowing when to stop. If repeated prompt adjustments aren’t producing value, human effort may be the better investment. Time, like trust, is a finite resource.

Good Enough First—Then Make It Great

Dennison reframed AI’s greatest strength as speed. AI can move work from good to “good enough” quickly, freeing humans to focus on refinement, strategy, and judgment—the work that truly requires experience and insight.

Human intelligence remains essential in deciding where AI belongs, where it doesn’t, and when it’s time to walk away. Knowing when not to use AI, Dennison argued, is just as important as knowing how to use it.

Applying AI With Intention

The session closed with a clear takeaway: successful AI adoption is less about technical skill and more about imagination and discernment. Associations that treat AI like any other technology—learning it, testing it, applying it thoughtfully—will be best positioned to benefit.

By pairing human intelligence with artificial intelligence, association professionals can reduce friction, increase capacity, and focus their energy where it matters most.

Interested in exploring how human-centered AI strategies can support your organization? Vanessa Dennison, CAE, CBAP, can be reached at vanessa@dennison-associates.com.



Meet Vanessa

VANESSA DENNISON, CAE, CBAP, is Principal at Dennison & Associates, where she helps associations adopt AI thoughtfully through strategy, training, and governance. She is passionate about empowering professionals to use technology in ways that strengthen—not replace—human expertise. Vanessa can be reached at vanessa@dennison-associates.com.