

**PBPA Podcast Transcript**  
**Should Your Nonprofit Use AI?**  
**(34:26 minutes)**



Sireesha ([00:02](#)):

Ready or not artificial intelligence or AI is here to stay. Let's make sure your nonprofit is ready. In this episode of the PBPA Podcast, we'll be talking about how nonprofits can effectively use AI while weighing important privacy, security, and ethical considerations. Hear what Jessica McKinney has to say about nonprofits using AI to further their missions, including employee guidance on the use of AI, how to sort out bias in AI, and the use of AI meeting notes.

Sireesha ([00:47](#)):

Hello and welcome to the PBPA Podcast. In each episode of the PBPA Podcast, we explore legal questions relevant to Georgia nonprofits. I'm your host Sireesha Ghanta, Counsel and Education Director at the Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta. PBPA strengthens our community by engaging volunteer attorneys to provide nonprofits with free business legal services. We provide numerous free resources via our website, including articles and webcasts specific to Georgia nonprofits and their business legal concerns. We also provide direct legal services to our clients. For more information on client eligibility requirements, to apply to be a client or to access our vast learning center, visit our website at [pbpatl.org](#). Before we jump into this episode's topic, keep in mind that this podcast is general information, not legal counsel, contact your attorney for guidance on your nonprofits' specific situation.

Sireesha ([01:57](#)):

Jessica McKinney is the Vice President and Deputy General Counsel at Smurfit WestRock, where she's a dynamic leader and counselor. She provides legal guidance on a variety of transactional matters and is an active member of the Atlanta nonprofit community. Today. She's also a teacher as we have a storm headed to Atlanta, and schools have pivoted to a virtual day. Don't you love technology <laugh>? And that's what we're here to talk about today. Thank you, Jessica, for being here to speak with me about an incredibly dynamic technology, ai, and it's use by nonprofits.

Jessica ([02:41](#)):

Good morning. How are you doing today?

Sireesha ([02:44](#)):

I am doing well.

Jessica ([02:45](#)):

Good.

Sireesha ([02:47](#)):

Trying to stay out of this storm's way. <Laugh>

Jessica ([02:50](#)):

I think we all are.

Sireesha ([02:52](#)):

So, Jessica here at PBPA, we did an episode about AI about a year and a half ago. Okay. So much has changed so quickly and AI has become that much more ubiquitous. Some nonprofit organizations want to jump in and take advantage of AI's efficiencies, but there are also many fears and important considerations. As someone who has, who works in-house, advising your client on these matters. And as a nonprofit board member, can you share your general thoughts on nonprofits using AI?

Jessica ([03:33](#)):

So let me first say, I think you are spot on with the fact that this is moving so quickly. Um, if you think about it, chat, GPT has only been around for 18 months, but it is moving at a pace that is faster than Facebook, faster than Twitter, Instagram, and people are trying to reconcile with how do I use it and how do I use it to help me as opposed to hurt our organization. So, you know, supporting here at, at Smurfit WestRock, I support all things enterprise. And one of those is IT. So I report to the chief information and technology officer as my internal client, and we have had to learn very quickly how to embrace this, but respectfully embrace it, making sure that, you know, our teams are knowledgeable on the pitfalls and that we train appropriately.

Jessica ([04:40](#)):

So I think to your question, I would say that having a healthy fear is a good thing. Um, I've heard extremes on both ends. Some people are exceptionally fearful and don't wanna touch it at all, and don't want their business or nonprofit to touch it. Others want to jump in and put all of their information into the tool and help it with efficiencies. And I think that there's some validity to both of those positions. You do wanna help it, uh, use it to help with efficiency so that you can focus on those things that are more complex or those things that need more human interaction. Um, and for nonprofits, that's absolutely the case with respect to, you know, doing the mission of the nonprofit and not getting bogged down in some of the things that AI could help you with the administrative things. But I think we just have to be cognizant of, of where we're going and, and what we want to achieve.

Sireesha ([05:49](#)):

So, Jessica, what should a nonprofit be aware of as they are embarking on the use of generative AI?

Jessica ([05:56](#)):

Yeah, so I think that the first thing to be aware of when we were talking about, you know, I, so there's one of my most favorite movies is a movie called What About Bob? I don't know if you remember that from back in the day with Richard Dreyfus. It's fantastic. It's one of the most hilarious movies I've ever seen. And I liken it to how people should treat AI. Number one, there should be a fear, but know that we've had AI for a very long time. Um, we have had calculators, that's AI, Alexa, Siri, digital face monitoring, x-rays, CT scans, all of that is ai. There are algorithms, uh, algorithms that are used to do a task and to help us move forward with technology. So let's acknowledge that we've already embraced AI. It's this new GenAI.

Jessica ([06:58](#)):

Where a tool can think for us that we need to be careful. And so that movie, what about Bob? If you remember, he took baby steps to the elevator, baby steps on the elevator. Whenever he was trying something new that he had a fear of in his mind, he had to have baby steps. And I think that's what we need to do when using GenAI, is to take baby steps. I think the first one is to give yourself the

information. So go out there and search for the information. I think that's what people would be doing if they're listening to your podcast. Um, and for nonprofits, you know, they're in a special space where I think they'd have to be concerned, particularly with some privacy concerns. Um, I know there are some nonprofits that are using, uh, Gen AI to help them with their donors.

Jessica ([08:02](#)):

But if you are putting information into a tool to help you be able to tell a more thoughtful story, more passionate story to your donors, to entice them to donate, you have to be careful what information of theirs you are putting in the tool, because you don't want someone else to then get access to that to say you know, what is their address? What's their name? How much have they donated in the past? You know, those sort of privacy concerns, I think are something, uh, is something that nonprofits need to be particularly aware of when using GenAI. Um, equally and, and in the same, you know, steady not divulging, uh, confidential information. Confidential information about your organization, whether it is, you know, your allocation of dollars or plans that you have for new projects. Those sort of things are confidential in nature until you divulge them to the public.

Jessica ([09:07](#)):

And so I think, you know, being concerned with sharing confidential information is something else that a nonprofit should be aware of. Um, I also think that, you know, if you see, and you're reading, any newspaper outlet right now, if you're listening to any news on the TV or your anything that you're reading, you're seeing that there are a lot of lawsuits that are coming up with GenAI, whether it is artists, saying that they didn't authorize their likeness, their likeness, you know, for use in a song or video. Um, you're seeing a lot of lawsuits with people that own, uh, copyrights saying, I didn't give permission for this. So I think equally nonprofits need to be aware of the intellectual property challenges that exist when Gen AI is being used. And when you are taking information, the output that is being given to you to understand, have those intellectual property rights been granted for the tool to be able to give it to you, give you that information.

Jessica ([10:28](#)):

Um, and then I think, you know, we've gotta be concerned with the fact that, if you're using something like a ChatGPT, and that large language model that it's trained from content. That is on the internet. So it gets content from Twitter, it gets content from Wikipedia, Reddit, Instagram, and we all know that everything that you read on the internet is not necessarily true. Um, and that it may be biased because of the input, how the input was put in there. And so I think that that particularly nonprofits need to pay attention to some of those ethical concerns and the biases that could exist in the output that they are receiving from the tool. And they need to be aware of that bias, aware of those ethical concerns, aware of the potential discrimination, because they don't want to be seen as advocating for that in their messaging external to their organization. So those would be kind of my big pay attention to those. And the only way that you're going to appreciate those is to with baby steps. Try it out, see what the output that you're getting is and, and work through whether or not any of those concerns you see them identified.

Sireesha ([12:14](#)):

And, and what are some ways that a nonprofit might be able to utilize generative AI after they're taken into consideration? What you have brought up in the last question. Can you give us some examples on how nonprofits might be able to use these tools?

Jessica ([12:36](#)):

Absolutely. So I think, the thought process behind Gen AI and ChatGPT and tools that are created and platforms that are created that are similar to those, is you want to use it to help you get better. You want to use it to help you be more efficient. You want to use it so that your people that are doing the jobs can focus on those tasks where only a human can get the work done. Those more mundane kind of repetitive tasks that are administrative kind of in nature, they can help you with, they still can't do it. I think. And, and that's the thing that people need to make sure that they appreciate with GenAI: it can't do the full job. It can get you a lot of the way there, but it can't do the full job. And so I think when you're thinking about some of the things that nonprofits do to help them operate.

Jessica ([13:42](#)):

You're constantly drafting thank you notes to donors. That might be something that Gen AI can help you with. It can also, again, paying attention to some of those things that we talked about to be aware of, but if you do it carefully it can help you to evaluate donor history. To suggest levels and of, of where the donor might be willing to go now. So you could see, you know, in 2021, did they give you a hundred dollars? In 2022, they gave you \$200. So you will know what the ask should be based on history. Um, and it will, it, it can tell you too, when a donor gave. What transpired for a donor to give so that you'll know how to interact with this particular donor? Did they give at an event, as opposed to in response to a mailing, then you know that that's a donor you need to invite to an event and you might wanna personally reach out. So that sort of information to help you analyze how best to touch this donor and to get them invested in your story, GenAI can help you with that.

Jessica ([15:06](#)):

Um, it can also help you to write grants. I mean, all nonprofits, you still need money to operate. Um, and, and there are so many different grants that are out there, but you know, as you know, in writing them, you have to make sure that you are telling your story sufficiently so that the organization that is reviewing the grant proposal understands why they should give you the money. Gen AI can help with that. Um, it can also help to create newsletters. That you guys are, are writing to send out to people that are your core constituency so that they can see what's going on, appreciate the good work that you're doing, and then want to go ahead and respond to those donor letters that the Gen AI is, is helping you write. So it can help full circle. I think that you just have to use it cautiously and, and with oversight

Sireesha ([16:12](#)):

And hearing these lists of activities that Gen AI could help with, it's a little daunting. It's for myself, someone who works in nonprofit, it's like, well, am I gonna have a job, uh, after all of this? But that kind of leads us to, I think our next question how to use Gen AI responsibly because there is a very real and huge important human element to all of this.

Jessica ([16:41](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I know that, you know, I've had to answer those questions internally. For my company, which is clearly not a nonprofit. Um, and, and talk to our employees as we're looking at use cases. And I think that the, the understanding or the appreciation that I would tell a nonprofit executive director or, you know, community outreach leader is look, make sure that you're communicating. We are not trying to use Gen AI to replace people. What we're trying to do is to use GenAI to make you better, to make you faster, to help you in your ability to execute on the roles and responsibilities for

your core job. And if you think about it, again, AI has been around for a while, a long time. We use calculators. Calculators, you know, would, were wanting to use them to help you do the math faster.

Jessica ([17:58](#)):

And so that's what I would say. And, and I think that employee concerns about being replaced by Gen ai, they're real. And, and I, I don't think that you should not address them. I think you should have a very honest conversation with everyone on staff about how we're using it, why we need to use it, and how it can benefit all of us so that then at the end of the day, we can go out there and spend the time working with and being responsive to the people that we are trying to support as part of our organization. And, and then after you've kind of managed expectations about the what, the how and the why, then you can say, okay, as a team, I think we need to do these things.

Jessica ([18:52](#)):

And one thing that I would say, and I think everybody who's listening to this podcast is at least starting to do that, is to get training. Get training on what ai, what the gen AI can do for you. Are you going to look at chat GPT and use that? Are you gonna use some other large language model? Are you going to have one developed specifically for you in your organization so that then you can put your information in and it's secure. How are, how are you going to use Gen AI? What tool are you going to use? What information are you going to then be able to put into the tool? And the only way to be able to know that is to use some test cases sparingly and get familiarity with it. It's part of your training. It's part of the training that should be done with the team as a whole so that people can use it and get familiarity with it.

Jessica ([19:57](#)):

You know, we had one of our business leaders who was very apprehensive originally about using Gen AI. Um, we gave training to people that we gave, you know, spot licenses to just to get acclimated with it. And he used it and created a little persona that would help him out with his tasks. And he was an audit. Um, and, and so he ended up doing a training. For other people internally who were like, we don't want it. And we're like, look, at the end of the day, if this person who is uber conservative, who is working in our, on our audit staff can find a way to make it work and still validate the output, anybody can do it. And he ended up being one of the best spokespeople. For Gen AI because he had taken the time to learn, train, ask questions, and then use it in, you know, a minuscule task. And then once it worked there, open it up a little bit further, open it up a little bit further, and now he feels very comfortable and he's spreading that information to others to help with that fear. Help to dispense with the fear, but also to talk to people about how to use it in a smart way.

Jessica ([21:31](#)):

I think the, you know, when you're talking about how to use Gen AI responsibly too, is that we wanna make sure that you understand this is not a cure all. For the, the tasks and the work it has to be validated, the output has to be validated, and it can only be validated by a human. You've got to make sure that the information is correct, that it is not biased, that there are not any ethical concerns with the output. A human must do that.

Sireesha ([22:13](#)):

Let's use a specific example to talk about these responsible AI practices you just mentioned. For example, in the context of hiring, what are some specific considerations a nonprofit should keep in mind if they're using AI to help with hiring?

Jessica ([22:29](#)):

You know, you've gotta be very careful, especially if you're using it for employment issues. To review resumes and things like that, or, uh, create a posting. And I would say, look, that's another case where you've got to have a person validate the information. Because if the AI tool spits out a bunch of candidates for a job and you notice that their names, they're all males. Well, there you go. There's your bias right there. So who in your organization is gonna be tasked with validating that information? That should be somebody who's knowledgeable, who you hired for their expertise and who has a commitment to integrity. The tool doesn't have a commitment to integrity. To validate that and move forward so that you're executing on your strategy and mission of the nonprofit.

Sireesha ([23:34](#)):

Wow, those are all such great points. One final question I have for you, Jessica, is on a very specific kind of AI tool, and that's the meeting notes. Um, some of our listeners may have seen that come up if they're on a Zoom call or some other meeting application, and there is a prompt saying that someone's taking notes or offering to, to take notes. I see that quite often. I personally have mixed thoughts on it. What are your thoughts on it? What do you think?

Jessica ([24:10](#)):

So, and teams does it too. Teams will take a transcript and, and, you know, Jen AI will summarize the meeting for you if you, if you ask it too, with copilot and things like that. Um, it's funny because I was very reluctant to you. I, I don't care for too many meetings at all to be recorded and transcribed, and just by nature, being an attorney, you're very risk averse. And, and to me, all that could happen to it. I remember when it, it first, when I first saw it, and I was like, wait a minute, who's, who's recording this? And why are you recording it? And they're like, oh, so that we can go back for a transcript. And I'm like, wait, why would we do that? Because the thought process is that something would become right Exhibit A in litigation over some event.

Jessica ([25:09](#)):

And, and specifically when I think about, you know, where my team supports is if, if there's a dispute that you're having, you know, with an outside external entity and you're talking about it, you don't want it to be transcribed. So I would say, you know, I had my own, like you fear starting off, but I started to embrace it when I realized that it could be helpful and again, if we were smart about how we were using it.

Jessica ([25:48](#)):

So the first thing I would say is that everyone on the call needs to be fully made aware that you are recording and that a transcript is being made and people should be counseled on acting and speaking eloquently and responsibly in those meetings. So I, that would be the first thing, is that everyone needs to be fully aware that they are being recorded and the meeting is being transcribed. Then I would say it needs to be used sparingly. Because you don't have to transcribe everything. There's no reason for it.

Jessica ([26:30](#)):

But I have been, but I do think that it is, it is very helpful and it can be very helpful. There have been meetings that I have gone to where the transcription happened and because, and this happens for all of us. This is the world that we're in, is you're in meetings all day. So inevitably what happens is one meeting runs into the next meeting, runs into the next meeting, and next thing you know, you're eight minutes late. It's nice to be able to log onto teams to a meeting eight minutes late, you pinged them, let 'em know you'd be late. But go ahead and start. And as you get on the meeting, you can look at copilot in the side and it'll do a summary for you in real time of what everybody's talked about over those eight minutes. So you don't have to, you know, then say, I'm sorry, you know, here's my thought, but you know, I joined the meeting late, so I don't know if you guys already talked about this. You've seen the transcription on the side, so you know who said what, and you're caught up to speed in real time. So I do think that the transcribed meetings can be valuable. I think you have to know which meetings to transcribe and record and, and why you wanna do it. And then definitely make sure that everybody is aware.

Sireesha ([27:47](#)):

That is a great perspective, and you just taught me about some new tools that I think I'm gonna wanna explore <laugh>. And now Jessica, I know before I said that was my final question, but this is my real final question. <laugh>. Do you have any thoughts on AI policies, whether organizations should adopt them, or what types of organizations should consider having them?

Jessica ([28:14](#)):

That's a really good question. Um, we have internally to Smurfit WestRock created an AI policy. Um, but we're a \$30 billion company. The reason for having an AI policy is, I liken it to the rest of the catalog of, of policies. From a compliance standpoint that an organization has to let people know how to use tools responsibly, how to act in the best interest of the organization and who to touch if you have any questions. So that's really, those, to answer those three questions was really the reason why we put a policy in place. I do not think that every organization particularly as you're looking at nonprofits and maybe limited amount of staff that you have and limited amount of use for Gen AI, that it would be necessary to have a full on policy for every organization.

Jessica ([29:34](#)):

But I do think that as you are looking at what platform and tool you're going to be using that, even if you don't have a policy as you're talking, you know, when we're talking about talking to your employees about the how, the why that you have a conversation about the things that you would cover in the policy. Making sure that they use it responsibly, making sure that they are not putting the nonprofits confidential and proprietary information to any tool. Um, making sure that they know who they need to reach out to if they want to use a platform and tool to get approval before they use it. So you can still talk about the same things that you would cover in a policy. But I don't necessarily think based on your size, the number of staff that every nonprofit profit would need to have an AI policy, if that makes sense.

Sireesha ([30:41](#)):

Yeah. And that does make sense. And so kind of like creating a pledge, not exactly as formal as a policy but a pledge just to make employees aware of what the expectations are.

Jessica ([30:55](#)):

Mm-Hmm, <affirmative>, absolutely. And, and I think that, you know, you can always revisit that. The good thing is, you know, we have an executive committee that I am on who is deal, we're, we're dealing with all issues related to AI and Gen AI or any subset that that develops thereafter. Um, just to make it sure that people are using it for the right reasons. Mm-hmm, <affirmative> to help our business execute for our customers. And I think that's the same thing that a nonprofit would wanna look at. And then you can come back and revisit it in six months after you have, you know, had some training and, and used some test cases and gotten familiarity. You say, okay, well now that, you know, everybody in the office is using it and we're using it for X, Y, and Z, maybe we need to have a policy. And it doesn't have to be long but maybe we need to have a policy. So I think that's a healthy discussion for a nonprofit to have, both with its management and with all the people who could be using it on your behalf.

Sireesha ([32:05](#)):

I think that's a great, uh, way to wrap up. 'cause it's all about having the discussion. I think sometimes at some organizations they're very proactive and they're excited about it. Some nonprofits are a little more hesitant about it, and some organizations it's some staff members, especially younger staff members may be using it. And the leadership who might be less familiar or less tech savvy may not be aware that they're using it or how they're using it. So it's really important for organizations to have a discussion. And these points that you have shared with us today, Jessica, are I think a great way to start that discussion and to just talk about what the possibilities are within the, an individual nonprofit, but also taking into consideration all of the concerns out there around privacy, security, and other ethical considerations. This has been such a great conversation, Jessica. Thank you so much.

Jessica ([33:10](#)):

Thank you for, for inviting me to do this. This is, I, for somebody who's not tech savvy, but you know, who's thrown into, has been thrown into supporting it and I've learned to love it and embrace it very carefully, but embrace it nonetheless. So this is, this is a great conversation and I wish everybody luck 'cause you know, at the end of the day, like we were talking before, it's only been around for 18 months and it's moving. So we gotta find a way to harness it.

Sireesha ([33:41](#)):

Definitely. Thanks so much, Jessica.

Sireesha ([33:44](#)):

We hope that you found this episode of the PBPA Podcast to be informative and helpful. We add new episodes every month with short conversations about general, yet important legal information for Georgia nonprofits. Remember that this is not legal counsel. Talk to your attorney about your organization's specific concerns. Thanks for tuning into the PBPA Podcast. And to all nonprofits listening out there, thank you for all the good work you continue to do in our community.