

Why Human Stories Matter in the Age of AI:  
What Robots Can't Replace  
18.01.2026, Zurich

Nives  
in motion



Why human stories matter is something I was reminded of this Sunday morning after a long walk and a visit to [Monocle](#), my favourite café in Zurich, partly because it never feels like just a café. There's always something happening - ideas circulating, no laptops allowed, conversations unfolding, design events about Swiss slow living... in any case, you never quite know what or who you'll encounter there. And that's exactly why I love it.



This time, I was lucky. A podcast was being recorded live and I arrived just as the conversation began. I stayed longer than planned, listening as the discussion moved across journalism, storytelling, and eventually AI - and how the narrative around it has shifted. Given my own area of work and interests, it immediately caught my attention.

So how did the perception of AI shift - or why it should shift if it hasn't?

For a long time - and in many circles still - AI has been discussed almost exclusively through fear: replacement, acceleration, the sense that something essentially human might be lost. But the tone in the newsroom podcast now felt different. The question isn't so much what will AI take from us? but what does it actually offer - and what will always remain human? One sentence, in particular, stayed with me. One of the speakers said: "AI can give you what it finds. Humans give you what they feel, what they've lived, what they've noticed along the way." I wrote it down immediately, afraid I might forget the exact phrasing, because it captures something essential.

The way stories are told has changed. They're immediate now, almost conversational. Like sending messages back and forth throughout the day: Look at the traffic. Photo. This is what I'm eating. Photo. I'm here. Proof. We live surrounded by live content,

fed to us 24/7 if we allow it. There is always something happening, somewhere, right now - and a constant urge to share it instantly. Because of that, storytelling - incl. journalism - has shifted. Away from distance and detachment, and toward presence and perspective. Toward the simple but powerful idea of I was there. I saw this. I heard that. This is what it felt like. A robot can explain what happened. It can summarize, contextualize, and optimize. But it can't tell you what the room smelled like or how the air changed just before someone spoke. It has data, but no memory of standing somewhere, noticing something small that suddenly mattered.

### ***Why Human Stories Matter in Journalism***

And this is where the conversation becomes uncomfortable for some - especially for more traditional forms of journalism. Because this shift doesn't only challenge technology; it challenges habits, established ways of writing. The idea that objectivity means distance or that authority comes from removing oneself from the story. Today, that's no longer enough.

Even experienced journalists - perhaps especially them - are being asked to adapt: to move closer, to acknowledge presence without losing credibility, to understand that saying I was there doesn't weaken a story; it often strengthens it. In a world where AI can already produce perfectly structured, neutral summaries, the human edge lies elsewhere: in experience, judgment, and emotional intelligence. This should make one thing clear: AI isn't the enemy. It's a tool, a very capable assistant. But it isn't a soul.

Maybe that's where much of the fear comes from: from confusing utility with identity. AI can help structure a story, support research, speed up processes - undeniably so.

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But it still needs humans to bring the pulse, the texture and the emotional weight that turns information into something that lingers and convinces.

Especially now, when we consume almost everything in real time, what becomes valuable isn't speed - its presence. Marking your spot. Claiming your perspective. Saying: This is where I stood. This is what I noticed. This is how it landed in my body. A machine can explain the world. A human can invite you into it!

That whole conversation stayed with me. Enough that, now back on my couch, I felt the urge to write it down - partly so it has a place to live, partly as a reminder for myself, and partly because it feels like something worth sharing; something that might resonate with others, or even shift a perspective.

In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, what matters more - not less - is our ability to stay human. To feel. To pay attention. To tell stories rooted in experience rather than distance. AI can help you write the sentence. Only you can give it a heartbeat.

