



## An unfiltered look at what's percolating now

Below are key themes that dominated corporate communications news in March 2025.

### BRANDS ARE RETHINKING WHERE — AND WHY — THEY SHOW UP.

March saw a growing number of advertisers recalibrate where they show up — not just to find audiences, but to avoid controversy. According to [\*Business Insider\*](#), YouTube has quietly become the world's biggest media company by reach, surpassing Disney. Another [\*Business Insider\*](#) article also reported that major advertisers are expanding into conservative platforms like Fox News, The Daily Wire and Rumble, suggesting a more calculated, risk-aware approach to media buying. As [\*Financial Times\*](#) explored, the shift isn't just about reach, but navigating cultural fault lines. After high-profile backlash faced by brands like Bud Light and Disney, some agencies are actively steering clients away from certain platforms to avoid political heat. A third [\*Business Insider\*](#) piece dove into how brands are adapting their media spend to minimize legal and reputational risk. Meanwhile as [\*Financial Times\*](#) pointed out, ad spend overall is consolidating among fewer platforms — with YouTube, Amazon and Meta claiming 50 cents of every global ad dollar .

**Bottom line:** For communicators and marketers, the message is clear: platform strategy is no longer just a media decision — it's a brand one. Leaders must weigh not just audience demographics, but also the cultural and reputational context of each channel. As political polarization deepens and media choices grow more symbolic, businesses need to be hyper-intentional about where and how they show up, and what they stand for when they do.

### EMPLOYEE LISTENING IS GETTING SMARTER — BUT ACTION STILL SPEAKS LOUDEST.

Released in March, [\*The State of Employee Listening 2025\*](#) report highlighted a promising shift: more companies are listening to employees more often — and in more targeted, sophisticated ways. According to the report, 95% of organizations now gather feedback at least twice a year, with many doing so quarterly. But even as listening grows, the real hurdle remains: turning insights into meaningful change. The most mature companies are using feedback to personalize learning, tailor coaching and power business transformation. Yet, the report found that only 1 in 4 organizations feel they have the right internal resources needed to follow through. That action gap was echoed by [\*Fast Company\*](#) exploring why some recognition efforts ring hollow: employees know when sentiment isn't matched by behavior. At the same time, [\*HR Executive\*](#) highlighted some companies are experimenting with radical transparency — publishing 360-degree feedback in real time. While not for everyone, it underscores the growing demand for organizations to not just listen, but to model accountability. And for many, the most overlooked voices may still be on the front lines — [\*Fast Company\*](#) made the case that those closest to the work often have the clearest view of what needs to change.

**(Cont.) Bottom line:** Listening programs are no longer a "check-the-box" HR function — they are a strategic asset. But to unlock their full value, leaders must build the muscle for action across every level of the organization. That means pairing feedback with transparency, embedding it in learning and development, and equipping managers and frontline teams alike to turn insights into improvement. When listening becomes part of the operating system — not just a quarterly survey — it drives the kind of meaningful change employees actually feel.

## ESG COMMITMENTS ARE SHIFTING AS POLITICAL, REGULATORY AND MARKET DYNAMICS SHIFT.

In March, the ESG (environmental, social and governance) conversation sharpened around two key themes: regulatory recalibration and corporate resolve. [\*ESG Dive\*](#) recapped the recent Berkeley Corporate and Climate Summit, where speakers acknowledged the politicization of ESG but emphasized that climate remains a priority for many investors. In a related piece, [\*ESG Dive\*](#) also reported that LEGO has nearly tripled its green investments over two years — an example of how some companies are integrating sustainability into long-term business strategy, despite political headwinds. Meanwhile, [\*The Wall Street Journal\*](#) covered the SEC's move to limit the inclusion of shareholder proposals on climate and social issues — potentially curbing activism on ESG-related resolutions. In addition, [\*The Financial Times\*](#) explored the European Commission's proposal to ease sustainability reporting requirements. And in a critical take, [\*Vogue Business\*](#) warned that loosening disclosures may hinder progress on supply chain transparency and stakeholder trust.

**Bottom line:** To navigate the ESG terrain, leaders must clearly articulate their sustainability commitments, ensure transparency in reporting and remain agile to adapt to evolving standards and expectations. Integrating ESG into the core business strategy goes beyond compliance to building resilience and long-term value in a rapidly changing world.

## DEI INITIATIVES FACE REGULATORY SCRUTINY AND SHAREHOLDER RESPONSES.

DEI remained in the spotlight as companies navigated intensifying regulatory, legal and reputational pressures. [\*The Wall Street Journal\*](#) reported that the FCC has opened an investigation into Disney's DEI policies, raising questions about how federal oversight may shape the future of corporate diversity programs. On the investor front, [\*Fortune\*](#) tracked how shareholders are increasingly weighing in. At companies like Apple and Deere & Co., proposals aimed at rolling back DEI efforts were soundly rejected — suggesting that support for inclusive workplace practices may still hold in boardrooms, even amid political pressure. Internationally, [\*Bloomberg\*](#) noted that Trump-era executive orders are complicating compliance for global companies trying to harmonize values across borders. And [\*The Wall Street Journal\*](#) explored how Europe-based multinationals are taking divergent approaches: scaling back DEI in U.S. operations while maintaining or even expanding those efforts abroad. Meanwhile, [\*HR Executive\*](#) highlighted that many organizations continue to invest in DEI — particularly in areas like pay equity and inclusive leadership — despite a fraught environment.

**Bottom line:** The backlash is real — but so is the resilience. DEI is no longer just a social imperative; it's a strategic one. Leaders and communicators must navigate shifting expectations across regions, craft values-led messaging grounded in business realities and prepare for more scrutiny ahead. In this moment, clarity, consistency and commitment matter more than ever.