



# An unfiltered look at what's percolating now

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

## CEO VISIBILITY IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL — IT'S ESSENTIAL.

Our newest white paper, [\*In Plain Sight: The New Reality of CEO Visibility and Influence\*](#), maps out how the expectations of top leaders have shifted — and how communicators can help them keep pace. The research shows that CEOs are navigating a paradox: they are more visible than ever, yet their influence depends less on the volume of their presence and more on the authenticity of their engagement. Our paper highlights four dimensions shaping the new visibility mandate: values-based leadership that builds trust in volatile times, multi-channel engagement that balances reach with relevance, the credibility conundrum where leaders' words are scrutinized against actions, and AI-augmented influence that raises both opportunities and risks in how executives connect with stakeholders.

**Bottom line:** In an age of information overload, the CEOs who stand out are those who anchor their voice in clarity, values and human connection. Equipping CEOs to thrive in this new reality requires expanding their toolkit beyond message discipline to include empathy, adaptability and a readiness to meet stakeholders where they are. Communicators should prepare executives to lean into their values, embrace dialogue across channels and build credibility through consistent, human engagement. Silence isn't neutrality anymore — it's a statement in itself.

## EVERY BRAND SHOULD BE E-E-A-T-ING TO STAY RELEVANT AND BUILD TRUST IN THE AGE OF AI.

Generative AI is quickly becoming the new front door to brand discovery. According to [\*Semrush\*](#), 1 in 10 U.S. internet users now turn to tools like ChatGPT, Gemini or Perplexity first when seeking information. At the same time, A new [\*Ahrefs SEO Statistics for 2025\*](#) report noted that AI Overviews reduce clicks to websites by 34.5%, while over 1.5 billion users accessed AI Overviews monthly in Q1 2025. Add to this the growing reliance on Reddit, Wikipedia and YouTube as source material for AI-generated answers, and the ground is shifting fast: traditional rankings alone no longer guarantee visibility, as highlighted by [\*AdAge\*](#), while [\*Ahrefs\*](#) also confirmed 32% of Nasdaq companies see a strong correlation between their search visibility and stock prices.

In this zero-click world, inclusion matters more than rank. Brands must go beyond chasing clicks and focus on becoming the trusted citations that AI answers surface. As [\*Kathryn Parsons\*](#), VP of Content Strategy at Havas Health, put it, this requires a new mindset: brands need to think of themselves as knowledge graph entities, not just websites. That means engineering for relevancy so AI bots can understand their content, creating citation-worthy assets rooted in proprietary data and expert (...)

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voices, reinforcing authority through earned media in credible outlets, and optimizing the platforms that AI heavily leans on. And because hallucinations and misattributions are a real risk, always-on monitoring of AI Share of Voice and citation frequency is becoming essential.

**Bottom line:** Communicators and marketers must help brands E-E-A-T: demonstrate Expertise, Experience, Authority and Trust at every turn. That means building content that AI wants to cite, reinforcing credibility in the sources it respects, and keeping a constant eye on how often — and how accurately — AI engines are putting your brand in the story. In the age of AI search, being the answer is the only ranking that matters.

## ICONS MATTER — AND HERITAGE CAN'T BE REBRANDED OVERNIGHT.

U.S. restaurant chain Cracker Barrel's attempt to modernize its logo (by stripping away the iconic barrel, seated man and "Old Country Store" tagline) backfired almost immediately and reverberated around the world. [The Guardian](#) and [The Week](#) both explored how Cracker Barrel became a flashpoint in the culture wars, with right-wing activists seizing the rebrand as symbolic of a broader ideological battle. [Fast Company](#) highlighted the company's significant market loss — around \$100 million — following the announcement while [BBC](#) reported on its quick reversal. Analysts agreed the misstep wasn't just about design — it was about emotion and culture. [Forbes](#) discussed how logos now live in memes, TikToks and political debates as much as on storefronts, multiplying backlash once entering the cultural bloodstream. [Alinvest](#) emphasized the financial risk, noting how quickly brand identity decisions can trigger market losses and investor skepticism. And [Smith Digital](#) underscored that the redesign felt sterile and disconnected, erasing the warmth and nostalgia that had defined Cracker Barrel's customer experience for decades.

**Bottom line:** Together, these perspectives revealed a central truth: heritage cues aren't aesthetic relics — they are emotional anchors. Rebranding should always preserve the emotional DNA that customers hold dear, balancing nostalgia with innovation. As [Lesley Sillaman](#), Managing Director at HAVAS Red, noted, Cracker Barrel overlooked some crisis-communications fundamentals: "No apparent customer testing, little effort to frame the rationale in a way that would resonate, and a rollout so muted that it felt cold and dismissive to loyal fans. That combination magnified the backlash, making the logo a lightning rod instead of a bridge to the future. A more thoughtful approach could have positioned the change as both modern and customer-centric — keeping existing patrons on board while attracting new ones. The lesson: brands that skip this step risk turning a refresh into a crisis, while those that get it right can achieve both stability and growth."

## PURPOSE PAYS — BUT ONLY IF IT'S OPERATIONALIZED.

Mounting evidence shows that companies with a strong sense of purpose consistently outperform peers, not just in reputation, but in attracting talent and building resilience. [Fast Company](#) recently argued that purpose-driven brands gain a competitive edge in uncertain times, while [Forbes](#) highlighted that values-led companies are seeing measurable ROI. Yet as [Earned First](#) warned, purpose can easily "go underground" if it isn't embedded in everyday practices, becoming rhetoric without resonance.

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Research from [\*MIT Sloan Management Review\*](#) made clear that operationalizing purpose requires more than an inspiring mission statement. The missing link between purpose and performance lies in how leaders and managers at every level engage with their teams: having the confidence and competency to talk about purpose, connect it to day-to-day work and reinforce it with consistency. Purpose becomes sustainable when it's not just a corporate platform but a lived, ongoing dialogue — one that builds clarity, cohesion and trust across the organization.

**Bottom line:** For communicators and business leaders, the challenge is to make purpose actionable. That means equipping leaders to speak about it credibly, ensuring consistency across messages and channels, and helping employees see how purpose connects to their roles. Done well, purpose becomes more than a story you tell — it becomes the operating system for long-term performance.

## ACTIVATING EMPLOYEES AS BRAND AMBASSADORS ON LINKEDIN DRIVES IMPACTFUL ROI.

In today's hyper-connected ecosystem, harnessing employee voices on LinkedIn is both smart and strategic. [\*DSMN8\*](#)'s global study showed employees create social media impact on par with corporate channels, with employee-generated posts delivering 8x more engagement than branded content and significantly higher trust among audiences. [\*Ragan\*](#) reinforced this finding, noting that authentic posts from employees not only outperform official content in reach and engagement but also extend the life of corporate messaging by sparking more organic shares and conversations. Additionally, [\*Vulse\*](#) highlighted how LinkedIn is increasingly rewarding "real people" over brands, making genuine employee contributions more visible and valuable than ever.

**Bottom line:** Communicators should craft a LinkedIn advocacy strategy that identifies authentic employee storytellers, equips them with compelling content and measures their contribution in reach, profile growth and earned visibility. In a world where trust matters more than broadcast, employee advocacy goes beyond amplification to trust-building that translates into real-world returns.