



AN UNFILTERED LOOK AT WHAT'S PERCOLATING NOW

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

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE AND ONLINE INFLUENCE ARE THE NEW POWER DUO FOR BUSINESS GROWTH.

The corner office is being remodeled for today's hyper-connected world. No longer just a seat of strategy, it's now a stage. As [Fast Company](#) reported, CEOs are increasingly embracing the role of influencer, using storytelling and digital platforms to humanize leadership and build trust. From Lyft's David Risher sharing stories from behind the wheel to Spotify's Daniel Ek communicating strategy through Instagram Reels, leaders are learning that authentic visibility drives credibility and engagement. But visibility alone isn't enough. A companion [Fast Company](#) piece called executive presence the new currency of business growth, with gravitas, clarity and empathy emerging as core differentiators among high-performing leaders. [Ragan](#) emphasized the art of appearing calm under pressure — transforming from “stressed duck to graceful swan” — as an essential skill for communicators guiding leaders through change. Meanwhile, [Forbes](#) warned that traditional thought leadership is losing its edge, urging executives to evolve from scripted messaging to authentic, values-driven dialogue that fosters trust — a theme echoed in another [Forbes](#) piece positioning trust itself as a public good.

Bottom line: For communicators and business leaders alike, the mandate is clear: help executives show up as both credible and human. That means pairing influence with intentionality, refining presence to convey confidence and empathy, and shaping content that reflects who leaders are, not just what they say. In an era where perception is power, presence and authenticity have become the ultimate growth strategy.

COMPANIES MUST TREAT TRUST AS A PUBLIC GOOD AND STAND FIRM ON THEIR VALUES.

In an era defined by polarization and skepticism, trust has become the ultimate infrastructure — fragile, foundational and essential to long-term growth. As [Forbes](#) reported, we are facing a “trust emergency,” with only a third of Americans believing most people can be trusted and nearly seven in 10 suspecting business leaders of spreading misinformation. Yet, as [Harvard Business Review](#) pointed out, consumers increasingly want brands to take visible, values-driven action in the face of controversy. [Marketing Dive](#) and [ESG Dive](#) echoed this sentiment, noting that while many companies are acting on climate commitments, fear of backlash and greenhushing still hold others back from speaking up. At the same time, [HR Dive](#) highlighted the delicate balancing act inside **(Cont.)**

(Cont.) organizations, where employees express fatigue over political discourse even as they expect their employers to act with integrity. And as another [Harvard Business Review](#) piece underscored, this tension has prompted some companies to retreat into “strategic hibernation” — a pause that may protect reputation in the short term but risks eroding trust in the long run.

Bottom line: For communicators and business leaders, trust isn’t a campaign but a system. Building it requires consistency between words and actions, transparency about progress and setbacks, and the courage to hold firm on values even when the landscape shifts. When trust becomes shared currency — not just corporate collateral — it strengthens not only brands, but society itself.

ESG AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE QUIETLY POWERING THROUGH AMERICA’S POLITICAL STORM.

Despite the political headwinds and media backlash, corporate sustainability is proving both more resilient and more pragmatic than many expected. As [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) observed, while the public debate over ESG (environmental, social and governance) topics may have quieted, companies haven’t abandoned their commitments; they have simply shifted gears. Rather than grandstanding, many are embedding sustainability into core business functions from clean energy and supply chain resilience to stakeholder engagement and risk mitigation. A companion [MIT report](#) on sustainable supply chains underscored this quiet momentum, with organizations continuing to prioritize emissions reduction, supplier transparency and circular design, even amid regulatory uncertainty. The [Financial Times](#) pointed to investors’ steady appetite for sustainable finance, noting that ESG considerations are becoming inseparable from long-term strategy and capital allocation. Meanwhile, [Forbes](#) highlighted a clear evolution from performative pledges to measurable progress, as companies refocus on operational integration and resilience rather than PR wins. And as [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported, CFOs are increasingly taking the ESG reins — aligning sustainability with governance, cost efficiency and financial performance.

Bottom line: As sustainability storytelling is entering its “proof, not promise” era, the focus has shifted from lofty goals to practical results — translating purpose into performance. Those who communicate clearly about progress, trade-offs and lessons learned will build credibility in a landscape where quiet consistency speaks louder than catchy slogans.

WHEN SILENCE ISN’T GOLDEN.

In the wake of growing skepticism and tougher regulations, companies are finding that staying quiet carries its own kind of risk. [The Financial Times](#) reported that greenwashing is now facing real legal consequences — citing a French court ruling that found TotalEnergies misled consumers by promoting carbon neutrality while expanding fossil-fuel production. Meanwhile, [ESG Dive](#) highlighted the rise of greenhushing, as companies act on climate commitments but deliberately stay quiet for fear of political or reputational backlash. [The Wall Street Journal](#) added that U.S. firms are bracing for California’s sweeping new climate disclosure laws, even as final rules remain in flux, while [LSE Business Review](#) pointed to a surge in global climate litigation, with thousands of cases now shaping the future of corporate accountability. And, as [Responsible Investor](#) noted, shareholder engagement strategies are evolving in response, demanding greater transparency, credible data and a long-term view of sustainability performance. Whether it’s compliance, credibility or culture, proactive communication and verifiable reporting are now non-negotiable.

HEADLINES, HASHTAGS AND HUMAN VOICES ALL MAKE US RETHINK HOW TO CONSUME (AND TRUST) NEWS.

If the modern news cycle feels fractured, that's because it is. According to [Pew Research Center](#), only about a third of U.S. adults say they trust information from national news outlets — down sharply from a decade ago. Instead, another [Pew report](#) highlighted that many are turning to friends, influencers and online creators for updates, with social media now serving as both a news source and a trust filter. A third [Pew report](#) also showed that while platforms like YouTube and Facebook remain dominant for news consumption, TikTok has seen the most rapid growth, especially among young audiences who prioritize relatability over reputation. But even as information becomes more democratized, it's also becoming harder to discern. The [Institute for Public Relations' Disinformation in Society report](#) underscored how widespread misinformation has fueled a crisis of confidence — not just in the media, but in institutions more broadly. [PR Daily](#) added that when it comes to news, Americans now place the most trust in “people like me,” valuing authenticity over authority. And as [PRWeek](#) noted, this generational shift — especially among Gen Z — demands a more human, transparent style of communication that acknowledges uncertainty rather than overpromising certainty. Meanwhile, [The Wall Street Journal](#) highlighted that even traditional media organizations are fighting for credibility and independence in the face of growing government and audience pressure.

Bottom line: For communicators and marketers, the mandate is to meet audiences where trust already lives: through credible messengers, clear context and a tone that feels human. Facts still matter, but how — and by whom — they are delivered matters just as much.

HR, INTERNAL COMMS AND LEADERSHIP MUST UNITE TO HUMANIZE AI TRANSFORMATION IN THE WORKPLACE.

As organizations race to adopt AI, one truth is becoming clear: technology alone won't transform the workplace — people will. Recent insights from McKinsey, Forbes, SHRM and Ragan Communications converge on a critical point: employees are ready to work alongside AI, but they are looking for clarity, empathy and purpose from their leaders. According to [Ragan](#), HR and communications teams are increasingly using AI for sentiment analysis, learning design and feedback loops — but the technology is only as effective as the trust it's built upon. [Forbes](#) cautioned against tone-deaf automation, urging leaders to communicate with transparency and humanity, while [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) highlighted that giving employees agency through upskilling and co-creation helps them adapt more confidently to change. Meanwhile, [Fast Company](#) reminded us that cultural intelligence remains irreplaceable: empathy, intuition and connection still drive engagement and innovation in ways no algorithm can. And, as [MarTech](#) added, the shift in AI's role from volume to value means leaders and communicators must focus less on output, and more on meaning to help employees see AI as an enabler, not a threat.

Bottom line: For communicators, HR professionals and leaders alike, the challenge isn't just to deploy AI, but to translate it. Humanizing AI transformation means grounding every message in clarity, compassion and shared purpose. Because the future of work won't be powered by technology alone, but by the trust and understanding that make it work.