

CUP OF CORPORATE COMMS

AN UNFILTERED LOOK AT WHAT'S PERCOLATING NOW

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

REPUTATION RISK IS INCREASINGLY AN INSIDE JOB — AND IT CAN GO VIRAL FAST.

[*Business Insider*](#) was one of many outlets to report on a leaked audio recording that captured a senior Campbell's executive disparaging the company's own products and customers — calling the soups "for poor people," complaining about "bioengineered meat" and even insulting colleagues with racist slurs. What was intended as a private rant is now the centerpiece of a lawsuit, a public-relations firestorm and, ultimately, the executive's dismissal. [*Fortune*](#)'s follow-up coverage underscored the speed and severity of the fallout, noting how quickly consumer trust can erode when employees' private commentary contradicts a brand's public values. Adding another dimension, [*Harvard Business Review*](#) warned that reputational damage can spread even without direct culpability — crises within an industry or among peer companies can create spillover effects that tarnish brands simply by association. Meanwhile, [*Forbes*](#) highlighted a broader trend: employees often witness issues before the public does, meaning reputational risk now begins internally, where silence, misalignment or culture cracks can all be as dangerous as any external storyline.

Bottom line: Reputational risk doesn't just come from what you say. It also comes from what your people think when the cameras aren't rolling. Internal culture, employee conduct and hidden attitudes count. If you don't surface and address them proactively, a single leak can undo years of brand equity.

PURPOSE IS BECOMING LEADERSHIP'S MOST RELIABLE STABILIZER IN A VOLATILE WORLD.

Across November's coverage, a clear throughline emerged: leaders are turning to purpose not as messaging, but as a functional anchor for decision-making in an increasingly polarized environment. The [*HBR IdeaCast*](#) podcast spotlighted how purpose helps executives navigate political tension without appearing reactive, while the [*HBR On Leadership*](#) podcast emphasized its role as the root system of credibility — guiding trade-offs, sharpening focus and preventing whiplash as narratives shift. [*Ragan*](#) reported on the pressure inside boardrooms, where leaders are now expected to communicate with clarity and conviction amid turbulence, making a grounded purpose essential to avoid performative statements. Meanwhile, a related article from [*Harvard Business Review*](#) underscored how purpose strengthens stakeholder trust by aligning behavior with values and another [*Harvard Business Review*](#) piece highlighted how it positions business as a genuine force for good when embedded into governance, incentives and daily actions. Together, these insights reinforce what our new white paper, [*Purpose Reimagined: Enduring Values for Lasting Impact*](#), makes plain: purpose has evolved from a brand ideal into an operating framework for resilience. **(Cont.)**

(Cont.) Bottom line: Purpose is only powerful when it is lived. For communicators, marketers and business leaders, this means ensuring that purpose shows up consistently in decisions, trade-offs and behaviors — not just in campaigns. When leaders use purpose as their north star, they steady their organizations through uncertainty while also earning the trust and loyalty that make purpose truly enduring.

CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY MESSAGING IS UNDERGOING A RESET TO BE CLEARER, BOLDER AND CLOSER TO BUSINESS VALUE.

[Axios](#) reported that companies are rethinking ESG entirely, shifting away from jargon toward language that clarifies business value, risk and long-term resilience. [Forbes](#) echoed this call for plain speak, noting that the alphabet soup of ESG terminology is turning off audiences who want transparency, not technicality. Meanwhile, at the geopolitical level, [Financial Times](#) coverage of COP 30 showed more than 80 countries backing a roadmap to phase out fossil fuels — a signal that ambition is rising even as progress remains uneven. On the ground, [The New York Times](#) captured the intensity of public pressure, documenting thousands marching outside negotiations demanding faster action and greater accountability. And in a separate piece, the [Financial Times](#) highlighted the rapid reinvention of the Chief Sustainability Officer role, from compliance steward to cross-functional strategist expected to translate climate commitments into commercial outcomes. Taken together, the coverage reflects a broader shift: climate and sustainability communications are moving past slogans and into strategic, value-driven clarity.

Bottom line: For communicators and business leaders, the mandate is to simplify without softening. Ditch the jargon, make the business case explicit and connect climate action to real-world impact. Clear, credible sustainability messaging is no longer a reputational add-on but a competitive advantage.

WHEN BRAND EXPERIENCE BECOMES MORE THAN A MOMENT, IT BECOMES IDENTITY.

HAVAS Red's new white paper — [A New Lens on Brand Experience 2026](#) — signals a pivot: in a fragmented, hyper-connected world, brand activations must evolve from “pop-ups” and “pickups” to immersive, emotionally resonant experiences that shape identity over time. As PepsiCo and L.L. Bean exemplified in a recent panel at the [Fast Company](#) Innovation Festival, iconic brands stay relevant by blending heritage with purpose-driven product innovation and cultural engagement — they get to the heart of what people need, embed themselves into trending moments and aren't afraid to reinvent themselves boldly. And across the board, experiential thought leaders now argue that true brand activation is less about flashy events and more about building meaningful, sustained emotional bonds — with experiences that feel human, values-led and lasting. **(Cont.)**

(Cont.) Bottom line: For marketers and brand leaders, brand experience isn't a one-and-done event, but an evolving narrative. Start treating every activation, product touchpoint and interaction as a thread in your brand's larger story. When experience becomes identity, your brand becomes part of how people — not just consumers — see themselves.

DESPITE SHIFTING HEADWINDS, DEI REMAINS BOTH LEGALLY SOUND AND STRATEGICALLY ESSENTIAL.

HR Dive captured the clearest signal from the American Bar Association's new guidance from its Annual Labor and Employment Law Conference: organizations should not retreat from DEI but refine and reinforce it. Experts warned that quick fixes — such as quota-like targets or poorly documented selection processes — are the very tactics most likely to draw scrutiny. Instead, they urged companies to double down on compliant, evidence-based approaches rooted in job-related criteria and transparent documentation. In a companion piece, also by *HR Dive*, legal experts emphasized that DEI programs, when designed correctly, remain firmly within legal bounds and are critical to attracting talent, reducing risk and maintaining competitive positioning. Rounding out the series, *HR Dive*'s third related piece on pay equity and barrier analysis underscored that these practices are not only "very legal," but also among the most effective tools for understanding systemic gaps and ensuring fairness. Together, the coverage signaled a broader message: the path forward is not to pause DEI — it is to mature it.

Bottom line: For communicators and business leaders, the moment calls for clarity, precision and confidence. Stay anchored in compliant, data-driven DEI strategies, articulate the business and fairness case clearly, and reinforce the message that DEI done well is both legally sound and operationally smart.