

HAVAS

CUP OF CORPORATE COMMS

AN UNFILTERED
LOOK AT WHAT'S
PERCOLATING NOW

Below are key themes that dominated corporate communications news in August 2026.

MEDIA RELATIONS IS STARTING TO LOOK LIKE MEDIA BUYING.

For years, communicators have borrowed planning tools from marketers, adopting audience segmentation, journey mapping and data-driven measurement to strengthen earned media programs. LinkedIn's new **Media Planner** reflects how far that convergence has progressed, providing marketers with more sophisticated ways to identify, understand and activate target audiences. The bigger signal is that earned media planning is increasingly being held to the same standards as paid campaigns: audience intelligence, strategic targeting and measurable impact.

The shift comes as stakeholders consume information through a highly interconnected mix of earned, owned, paid and social channels (at HAVAS Red, we call this "merged media"). Journalists, analysts, creators, employees and executives are often influencing the same audiences at different moments in the decision-making journey.

As a result, communicators are being asked not just who they pitched, but who they reached, influenced and moved to action. The traditional media list is evolving into a broader understanding of influence ecosystems where audience insights matter as much as media relationships.

Bottom line: Media relations is becoming more data-driven, targeted and measurable. The communicators who thrive will be those who treat audience planning as a core communications capability, not just a marketing function.

Close the vaccination gap
Immunisation needs cooperation and a perspective

Letters to the Editor

Exam cancelled

CORPORATE PURPOSE IS MOVING FROM IDEOLOGY TO BUSINESS DISCIPLINE.



The backlash against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives continues to reshape how organizations talk about corporate purpose. Public commitments have become more restrained, language has evolved and companies have grown increasingly cautious amid mounting political, legal and regulatory scrutiny. Yet beneath the communications shifts, much of the underlying work remains in place. Organizations continue pursuing inclusion, talent development and social impact efforts, but increasingly frame those investments through the lens of business performance, risk management and stakeholder trust rather than broad social commitments.

Recent coverage from *ESG Dive* found that companies maintaining DEI programs have not underperformed peers that scaled initiatives back under political pressure. At the same time, *Fortune* reported that investors generally are not pressuring companies to abandon these programs and remain focused on business results. Meanwhile, *Financial Times* highlighted Deloitte's recent settlement with the Trump administration and the growing importance of ensuring programs are legally defensible and clearly connected to business objectives. Taken together, these developments suggest corporate purpose is entering a more pragmatic phase. The discussion is shifting from what companies believe to how programs contribute to talent attraction, retention, innovation, productivity and organizational resilience.

Bottom line: The era of aspirational purpose messaging is giving way to a more durable model rooted in business outcomes. Organizations that can clearly connect purpose initiatives to performance, trust and stakeholder value will be best positioned to navigate political and reputational headwinds.

GEN Z IS BECOMING AI'S BIGGEST USER AND ITS TOUGHEST CRITIC.

A growing tension is emerging in the next generation's relationship with artificial intelligence. According to *Mashable*, Gen Z is adopting AI tools at a faster pace than older generations and increasingly integrating them into daily routines. Yet their enthusiasm is increasingly accompanied by skepticism. Concerns about misinformation, job displacement, bias and the erosion of authenticity are fueling a broader reassessment of AI's role in society. As highlighted by *PR Daily*, Gen Z's criticism of AI-generated content is growing louder, as the conversation evolves into a more nuanced examination of responsibility, transparency and long-term consequences. This creates a unique challenge for brands. Younger audiences are not rejecting AI outright, nor are they embracing it unquestioningly. Instead, they're developing a more sophisticated relationship with it, valuing its utility while remaining alert to the potential downsides.

Bottom line: Brands should resist portraying AI as either a miracle solution or an existential threat. The strongest communications strategies acknowledge both the opportunities and risks of AI, using transparency, authenticity and responsible implementation as points of differentiation.



THE HUMBLE CAPTION IS BECOMING A SEARCH ENGINE.

Instagram is sending a clear signal to creators and brands alike: captions matter more than ever. As reported by *Social Media Today*, the platform is encouraging users to invest more strategically in caption writing, emphasizing compelling hooks, richer storytelling and keyword usage that supports discoverability. What was once considered supporting copy is increasingly shaping how content is surfaced, found and consumed.

The implications extend well beyond Instagram. Search behavior is increasingly shifting toward social platforms, where users seek products, recommendations, expertise and cultural insights. In this environment, captions, descriptions and metadata become critical visibility assets rather than afterthoughts. The same words used to tell a story now also help determine whether that story is found at all.

This reflects a broader convergence of content strategy and search strategy. As social platforms continue expanding search functionality, communicators must think about discoverability from the moment content is created.

Bottom line: Brands should stop treating captions as supplemental content. Captions are now the bridge between storytelling and search, requiring communicators to master both disciplines.



IN THE AI ERA, PR IS BECOMING THE OPERATING SYSTEM FOR TRUST.



Predictions that artificial intelligence would diminish the importance of communications are proving premature. Research from the *Rutgers School of Communication and Information* argues that stakeholder understanding, strategic judgment and relationship building remain essential components of effective communications, even as AI transforms how information is created and distributed.

At the same time, earned media is becoming harder to secure and, consequently, more valuable. *Campaign Middle East* notes that trusted third-party validation continues to play a critical role in establishing credibility. This dynamic becomes even more important as AI systems increasingly rely on authoritative external sources to understand and evaluate brands. Together, these developments point toward an expanded role for communications. PR is increasingly responsible for creating the trust signals that shape perception among customers, employees, investors, journalists, AI platforms and other stakeholders.

Bottom line: AI is changing the mechanics of communication, but it's amplifying the importance of trust. As machine-mediated discovery becomes more influential, PR's role is expanding from message amplification to reputation architecture.

**THANKS FOR READING AND STAY TUNED FOR OUR
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