

CUP OF CORPORATE COMMS

AN **UNFILTERED**
LOOK AT WHAT'S
PERCOLATING NOW

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

COMMUNICATORS MUST BUILD CREDIBILITY FOR BOTH HUMANS AND MACHINES.

AI-powered search is increasingly determining which brands, experts and organizations get discovered and recommended.

Fast Company argues the point directly: In B2B, the buyer is still human — and strategies that over-prioritize AI optimization at the expense of emotional resonance miss half the equation. A **recent survey** found that 60% of U.S. consumers say AI in brand messaging is a turnoff, confirming that the audiences communicators are trying to reach through AI systems are skeptical when they encounter AI-generated content.

Bottom line: Communicators who get this right won't be optimizing for two audiences separately. They'll be doing the harder thing: creating work with enough substance and specificity that it earns trust from both — the people reading it and the systems surfacing it.



THE NEW LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS MANDATE: BE RELEVANT, NOT PERFORMATIVE.



Stakeholders are increasingly selective about when, where and why leaders should speak.

Fortune reports growing skepticism toward CEOs weighing in on social and political debates unless those issues connect directly to the company's business or responsibilities. **GeekWire** reported that Microsoft is restructuring its communications function to distribute voice more broadly — away from top-down messaging and toward subject matter experts. **CEO Magazine** adds that AI is raising expectations around transparency and visible accountability from the top.

Bottom line: Leaders who speak on everything end up owning nothing. The communicators earning their keep right now are the ones helping executives find the two or three areas where they have genuine standing — and go deep there, rather than broad.

COMMUNITY IS BECOMING THE NEW CREDIBILITY.

People are increasingly turning to peer networks rather than institutions for answers and validation. Meta's **Forum** — a dedicated app for Facebook Groups — uses AI to surface relevant discussions and elevate trusted contributors, signaling that platforms see community-driven expertise as a growing source of influence. For communicators, the implication is clear: across the ecosystem, what a trusted community says about a brand is becoming as influential as what the brand says about itself. Havas Red's **Pattie Sullivan** put it well after a day spent in Pittsburgh's robotics ecosystem: the most valuable insights come not from the lab, but from deploying in the real world and watching how people actually respond. The same is true for communications — what resonates in a community is often messier and more instructive than what gets validated internally.

Bottom line: The future of influence belongs to organizations that cultivate communities. Building advocates, empowering experts and fostering meaningful participation may become as important as media relations or content creation in shaping reputation and relevance.

THE NEXT CREATOR WAVE IS OLDER, MORE EXPERIENCED AND INCREASINGLY MORE TRUSTED.

Older creators building communities around caregiving, health, career transitions and aging are giving brands access to authenticity that is hard to manufacture — and harder for AI to replicate. As [Digiday](#) reports, brands are moving toward longer-term partnerships grounded in shared values over one-off campaigns — a trend our [Red Hot Social Headlines](#) newsletter has been tracking closely. (Now in LinkedIn newsletter form — [subscribe here](#) to stay current.)

Bottom line: Authority is increasingly earned through lived experience. Communicators should rethink who represents their brands and whose stories they elevate. In a communications environment shaped by both human and AI curation, credibility and perspective are becoming strategic assets.



THE DEI DEBATE IS GIVING WAY TO A BUSINESS PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION.



After years of political, legal and reputational pressure, diversity initiatives are increasingly being evaluated through the lens of business performance. [HR Brew](#) reports that nearly three-quarters of Americans believe promoting DEI should be a business priority, with majorities associating diverse workforces with stronger profitability and innovation — and support rising across political affiliations. [Forbes](#) found no meaningful financial advantage for companies that scaled back DEI commitments, suggesting retreat hasn't delivered the benefits some anticipated. [USA Today](#) documents a surprising bipartisan momentum building around diversity even as political pressure continues.

Bottom line: The politics have become a distraction from the real question: can you show the work? Companies that connect their people strategies to measurable business outcomes — and communicate those outcomes plainly — will be better positioned than those still relitigating whether to have a position at all.

**THANKS FOR READING AND STAY TUNED FOR OUR
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