



TRENDS REPORT

2026

HOW TRUST IS BUILT IN PUBLIC

A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW CREDIBILITY IS ESTABLISHED TODAY,
AND HOW COMMUNICATIONS MUST EVOLVE TO SUPPORT IT.

THE SHIFT

TRUST IS NO LONGER COMMUNICATED. IT IS OBSERVED.

Credibility was once shaped through controlled messaging and defined moments of visibility.

Today, it is assessed continuously, through what stakeholders can see, experience and verify.

Trust is now shaped by:

- Leadership presence
- Transparency in decision-making
- Consistency between values and actions

Stakeholders are no longer persuaded by positioning alone. They are evaluating alignment.



IMPLICATION

Communications can no longer function as a layer applied after the fact. It must reflect how the organization actually operates.

TRUST IS BUILT BEFORE YOU NEED IT

CREDIBILITY IS ESTABLISHED BEFORE SCRUTINY ARRIVES

Organizations that communicate only at key moments often find themselves reacting to narratives they did not shape.

In contrast, consistent and intentional communication:

- Builds familiarity and context over time
- Strengthens relationships before they are tested
- Reduces pressure during periods of visibility or challenge

What we are seeing in practice is a clear shift:

Episodic communication to continuous trust stewardship

What this requires:

Discretion

Preceision

Taste

TREND INSIGHT

Trust is not built in moments of pressure. It is revealed by them.

VALUES MUST SHOW UP IN OPERATIONS

VALUES ARE NO LONGER DIFFERENTIATORS.
THEY ARE EXPECTED AND VERIFIED.

Audiences are increasingly discerning. They look beyond stated commitments to understand how values are enacted in practice.

This includes:

- Third-party validation
- Transparent partnerships
- Evidence of alignment in decision-making and design

When values appear only in messaging, they introduce risk.
When they are embedded operationally, they create stability.

We are seeing organizations with verifiable commitments:

Enter partnerships with greater ease

Build credibility more quickly

Sustain trust under scrutiny

TREND INSIGHT

The question is no longer what your organization values. It's whether those values can be clearly seen.

CULTURE + AI = CREDIBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

INTERNAL REALITY IS NOW EXTERNALLY VISIBLE

Two dynamics are shaping how organizations are perceived:

CULTURE

Stakeholders are paying closer attention to:

- How teams are represented
- Whether leadership behaviour reflects stated values
- The coherence between internal experience and external messaging

When culture is aligned, communications resonate. When it is not, the gap is quickly recognized.

AI

AI is now embedded in communications workflows and increasingly visible.

The concern is not usage, but governance.

Stakeholders are noticing:

- Flattened tone
- Lack of nuance
- Absence of clear human authorship

What high-performing organizations are doing:

Using AI as support,
not substitution

Maintaining human
accountability

Establishing clear
internal guardrails

TREND INSIGHT

Trust is reinforced
through human judgment,
not automated output.

RELEVANCE OVER REACH (AUDIENCE STRATEGY)

BROAD MESSAGING NO LONGER CREATES CONNECTION

In a saturated environment, generalized communication often goes unnoticed.

Organizations seeing stronger engagement are:

- Prioritizing audience understanding over scale
- Segmenting based on values and needs
- Tailoring messaging while maintaining consistency

What we continue to observe: Relevance strengthens engagement. Engagement expands reach.

What this requires:

Clear audience segmentation

Ongoing listening and refinement

Content anchored in human experience

TREND INSIGHT

Being widely visible is not the same as being meaningfully heard.

CONTENT ECOSYSTEM

CONSISTENCY IS NO LONGER ENOUGH.
VARIETY WITH COHERENCE IS REQUIRED.

Organizations maintaining attention are:

- Operating with defined content pillars
- Balancing educational, human, and organizational content
- Creating systems rather than repeating messages

This allows for:

Depth without
redundancy

Consistency without
fatigue

Engagement across
multiple entry points

PROOF-LED CONTENT & HUMAN STORYTELLING WINS

CREDIBILITY IS BUILT THROUGH PEOPLE AND
REINFORCED THROUGH EVIDENCE

Two patterns are consistently outperforming:

EDUCATIONAL AND PROOF-LED CONTENT

Organizations that:

- Share knowledge openly
- Demonstrate outcomes
- Provide real examples

are being perceived as trusted resources rather than service providers.

HUMAN STORYTELLING

Audiences respond more strongly to:

- Lived experience
- Personal perspective
- Leaders who show up as whole individuals

What this signals:

Authority is no longer established through claims, but through what others are able to understand and apply.

TREND INSIGHT

Trust grows when people can see both who you are and what your work enables.

HOW TRUST SHOWS UP (SIGNAL SYSTEMS)

TRUST IS ASSESSED THROUGH SIGNALS,
OFTEN BEFORE WORDS ARE READ

Three areas are shaping perception:

DESIGN

Visual systems now signal:

- Accessibility
- Cultural awareness
- Operational alignment

PARTICIPATION

Organizations that invite dialogue are seeing:

- Stronger engagement
- Greater stakeholder investment
- More resilient relationships

LEADERSHIP VISIBILITY

Face-to-camera communication is becoming standard practice.

It allows stakeholders to:

- See who is accountable
- Understand intent and tone
- Build familiarity more quickly

What this requires:

Accessible,
values-aligned design

Visible
leadership presence

Communication systems
that enable participation

TREND INSIGHT

Trust is formed through what is immediately visible, not just what is explained.

LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUSTAIN TRUST:

- Communicate consistently, not episodically
- Align operations with stated values
- Make leadership visible and accountable
- Design for participation, not broadcast



ORGANIZATIONS THAT STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN TRUST:

- Rely on campaigns over systems
- Prioritize messaging over evidence
- Remain absent between key moments



THE SHIFT

Trust isn't built
through what's said.
It's built through
what's consistently
demonstrated.

