

SNACKABLE INSIGHTS FOR TIME POOR LEADERS

01

The CCO as Geopolitical Analyst

What: Council Members' top concern is "geopolitics, geopolitics, geopolitics."

So What: The CCO's role has irrevocably expanded beyond communications into geopolitical risk analysis. They are now their organisation's primary sense-maker, tasked with translating global chaos into actionable business strategy for the board.

Now What: CCOs must build geopolitical literacy into their teams and integrate real-time risk monitoring directly into the communications function, moving from observers to strategic advisors on world affairs.

02

The Rise of Strategic Silence

What: Only one-in-five (21%) Council Members now prefer to speak out on potentially divisive issues.

So What: The move from broad-based activism to strategic silence is a deliberate, risk-assessed decision not to engage on issues unless they are core to the business – a direct response to an increasingly polarised world.

Now What: The CCO has a key role to play in shaping business strategy and embedding purpose, building an organisation so resilient and a culture so authentic that it needs no public defence.

03

ESG's Pragmatic Era

What: 80% believe businesses will be more tentative in their ESG communications in the next year, and 75% agree that leaders are diluting their public commitments. Yet 52% feel ESG is fundamentally changing the way businesses operate.

So What: The era of loud, public ESG pronouncements is over. The risk of political backlash and accusations of greenwashing / wokewashing now outweighs the reward of public praise, forcing a strategic retreat from the spotlight.

Now What: Communicators must pivot from amplification to authentication. The focus must shift from public campaigns to embedding ESG principles into core business strategy and engaging in discreet, targeted communication with key stakeholders.

If you've only got time to read one page, make sure it's this one. Bitesize findings from our research, and what they mean for communicators.

04

The AI Paradox: Widespread Use, Waning Confidence

What: While 57% of communicators use AI daily, only 43% feel they use it "meaningfully" – a sharp drop from 58% last year. Worryingly, only 11% feel existing ethical policies are sufficient for its adoption.

So What: The initial hype is fading, replaced by a more sober reality. As leaders understand AI's complexities better, the bar for what constitutes "meaningful" use is rising. They see the potential but are acutely aware of the ethical and reputational risks.

Now What: The focus must shift from simple adoption to strategic integration. CCOs must champion the development of robust ethical guardrails and upskill their teams to move from basic efficiency to true strategic application.

05

The CEO's Indispensable Advisor

What: Almost all (91%) Council Members report having direct and sufficient access to their CEO.

So What: In the polycrisis, the CCO has become a non-negotiable strategic partner. This access isn't just a perk; it's a necessity for navigating turbulence, with the CCO-CEO relationship often forged and fortified in times of crisis.

Now What: CCOs must leverage this access to move beyond communications counsel to providing holistic business strategy advice, using data and insights to justify their indispensable seat at the table.

06

The Death of the "ESG" Acronym?

What: Only one-third (33%) of Council Members believe the term 'ESG' effectively describes what a company is doing in these areas.

So What: The label itself has become a politicised and unhelpful catch-all, losing its credibility and analytical value.

Now What: Ditch the jargon. CCOs should lead the charge to speak specifically and authentically about the issues that are truly material to their business: climate risk, workforce equity, and supply chain resilience. The principles matter more than the acronym.