

Communications and C-Suite disconnect impacts negatively on media

A new report, *Navigating a Changing Media Landscape* examines how the continuing disconnect between CEOs and Boards of Directors (BODs) and their communications teams, is how this gap is complicating the adaptation to a rapidly evolving media landscape characterised by shrinking newsrooms, the decline of traditional media, the rise of misinformation and increasing polarisation.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) According to the research participants the disconnect between COOs and the executive suite is significantly impacting media relations strategies

Released by the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) Behavioral Insights Research Center and communications and marketing agency Peppercomm, the comprehensive research includes interviews and insights from nearly 50 communications professionals ranging from Chief Communications Officers (CCO) to media relations managers and similar.

Report findings

The report highlights several crucial findings:

- **Outdated Expectations**

Many CEOs and BODs are holding onto outdated media expectations, reminiscent of a time with more abundant resources and a less fragmented media environment.

This disconnect between the executive suite and communications teams often results in unrealistic demands for high volumes of earned media coverage, despite the reality of fewer media outlets and heightened competition for attention.

- **AI's role**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping how news is created and disseminated. AI technologies are

automating tasks such as content generation and data analysis, which enables faster and more personalised news delivery.

However, these technologies also introduce challenges, including the potential spread of misinformation and the risk of deepfakes.

As AI tools become more integrated into newsrooms, understanding and managing these risks is crucial for maintaining content integrity and public trust.

- **Integrated strategies for a new media era**

With shrinking newsrooms and increased misinformation, organisations must now focus on enhancing their digital and paid media strategies, leveraging influencer partnerships and adopting creative content approaches to stand out.

Setting realistic expectations is also vital. Media professionals should prepare for lower volumes of traditional coverage while optimising opportunities in emerging media channels.

Significantly impacting media relations strategies

According to the research participants, the disconnect between CCOs and the executive suite is significantly impacting media relations strategies.

“This misalignment between CEOs, BODs and communications teams is a key challenge as journalists now face more demands with fewer resources,” says Tina McCorkindale, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Institute for Public Relations.

“This leads to less precise reporting and challenges in fostering strong relationships with media professionals.

“Emphasising transparency and educating leadership on the current media landscape will be crucial in maintaining media trust and effectiveness,” adds McCorkindale.

Educating the BOD and C-suite

Respondents unanimously agreed that responsibility falls on the CCO and media relations specialists to educate the BOD and C-suite on the media landscape.

The following approaches are recommended:

- Ongoing training for current media relations professionals, which keeps the media professional on an expert level, and maintains trust between executives and practitioners.
- Workshops and webinars on essential media-related relations topics.
- Newsletters/quarterly reporting on key coverage, metrics, and articles on the changing landscape.
- Monthly “PR issues” and media relations education at board meetings.

“Bridging this gap starts with better education and alignment within organisations,” adds Steve Cody, CEO Peppercomm.

“Communicators are doing themselves a disservice by not setting aside time to better educate the C-Suite and BOD on the ‘new’ newsroom reality.”

Align expectations

The findings from this research showcase how the evolving media landscape presents challenges and opportunities for CCOs and media relations professionals.

As traditional newsrooms shrink and customer preferences shift toward digital and social media platforms, media relations strategies must also adapt.

It also highlights the importance of targeted earned media placements that resonate with specific audiences, whether through high-profile business press, trade publications, or digital channels.

“The role of media relations professionals is becoming increasingly complex as the work to navigate a landscape characterised by rapid technological advancements, particularly in AI, and growing media fragmentation,” adds Cody.

“To not only survive but thrive in this environment, CCOs must prioritise ongoing education for both the C-suite and BOD and ensure their expectations are aligned.”

Methodology

The Institute for Public Relations and Peppercomm conducted online, written interviews with 22 CCOs from a wide range of industries and organisations and 22 media relations professionals from June to July 2024.

The respondents’ information has been white-labeled to protect confidentiality and offer an opportunity to provide candid responses.

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