

Public relations at a crossroads

The global public relations industry is standing at a pivotal moment. The newly released 2024–2025 World PR Report ([ICCO World PR Report – ICCO PR](#)), published by the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) in partnership with insight agency Opinium, delivers a compelling message: the profession must adapt, advise, and lead with ethics, now more than ever.

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Amidst a volatile geopolitical and economic backdrop, communications leaders around the world are grappling with complex challenges, from rapid technological disruption to the erosion of public trust. Yet, despite these pressures, the industry remains cautiously optimistic.

The report reveals that a majority of PR leaders anticipate growth and improved profitability. What's driving this confidence? A decisive shift toward strategic counsel and reputation management. The age of tactical execution is giving way to a more consultative, value-led approach that places reputation at the centre of business resilience.

Brandfundi is exemplifying this shift and has long championed the belief that reputation isn't simply a byproduct of PR, it is the business strategy.

“We remain deliberately small so we can stay fully aligned with what matters most: authenticity, ethical leadership, and delivering high-impact strategies that reflect our clients' values,” says Michelle Cavé, found and managing director. “In a world of noise, we help brands communicate with clarity and calm.”

AI: The double-edged sword

A standout finding from the report is the growing role of artificial intelligence in the PR industry. An overwhelming 74% of professionals are already using AI tools, with nearly half identifying AI proficiency as the most critical skill for the future. But innovation brings responsibility. Misinformation, flagged as the industry's top ethical concern, underscores the urgent need for strong governance in how AI is used in

communication.

Brandfundi approaches AI with measured optimism. “We see it as a tool, not a substitute for human judgement,” Cavé explains. “Ethical communication requires context, empathy, and intent, qualities no algorithm can replicate.”

Doing the right thing isn't always easy – but it's always right

Perhaps one of the most powerful insights from the ICCO report is that 73% of agencies have turned down work on ethical grounds. Like many in the industry, Brandfundi has, at times, chosen to walk away from work that didn't align with its values.

“There have been moments when we've had to prioritise our principles over profit, recognising that not every opportunity is the right fit.” Cavé admits. “It's never easy, especially as a smaller agency. But we believe that protecting our integrity protects our future.”

Another statistic further echoes this stance: 91% of PR professionals believe they must steer clients away from unethical behaviour. Yet the industry's self-assessed ethical score sits at just 6.4 out of 10, a signal of progress and a reminder that the bar must be raised.

Africa rising: A region of purpose and possibility

As confidence dips in North America and Western Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region are gaining momentum. Africa, in particular, is showing strength in ESG communications, influencer marketing, and digital innovation.

Brandfundi is helping lead this charge, blending deep local insight with global best practices to develop campaigns that deliver reputation, relevance, and measurable results.

Redefining the role of PR

As corporate narratives increasingly spill into the public domain, the ICCO report is clear: the future of public relations depends on ethics, empathy, and evolution.

For Brandfundi, these findings affirm what they've always believed. “This year's report reflects what we live and breathe daily,” Cavé concludes. “The true power of PR lies in building trust, through purpose, strategic thinking, and meaningful relationships.”

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Brandfundi



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