IPR Institute for Public Relations

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# THE TOP ~~10~~ 11 PUBLIC RELATIONS INSIGHTS OF 2017

FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, IPR

# INTRO

For the fourth annual edition of the Top 10 Research Insights of 2017, IPR did something different and added an 11th study because we believe every single one of these research studies have some great learnings for the profession. Thanks to our Board of Trustees, comprising senior-level executive and leading executives, who help us choose topics that matter to the profession. The fourth edition encompasses research ranging from fake news to the growth of digital and the impact of automation and artificial intelligence. Each year the IPR Board will continue to present top research insights that uncover the science beneath the art of public relations™.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS *



** The studies are ranked in no particular order*

# #1 DIGITAL LITERACY REMAINS A TOP CHALLENGE IN CORPORATE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

By: Altimeter, a Prophet Company

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

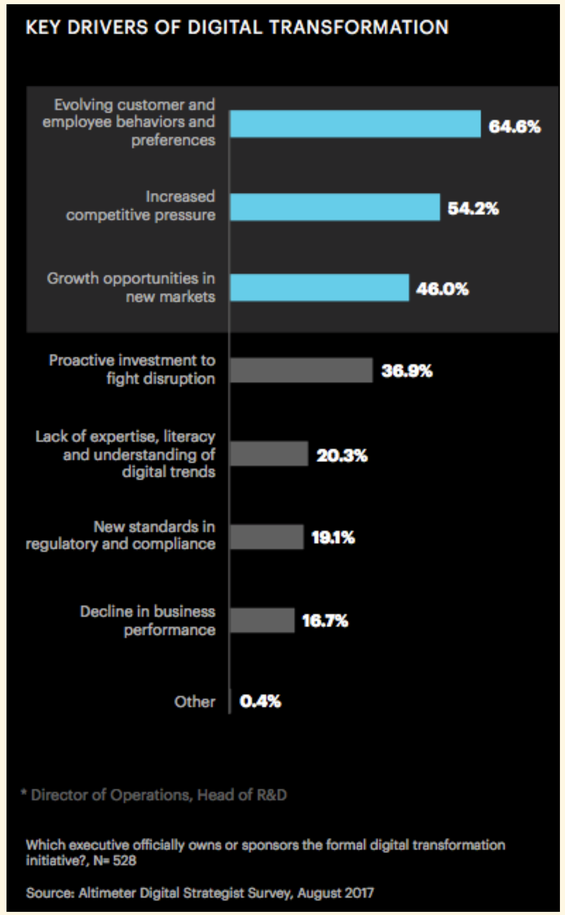
Even though an increasing number of businesses are beginning to invest in digital strategies, this report reveals there is still a gap between the ever-increasing digital trends within society and the extent businesses are investing in digital strategies, initiatives, and operational models.

## METHOD:

A survey was distributed to more than 500 executives and digital strategists.

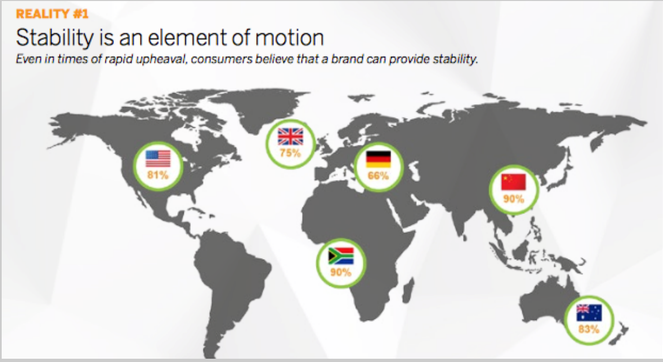
## KEY FINDINGS:

- Digital literacy remains an issue within organizations. The top two challenges for digital transformation were reported as a "low digital literacy or expertise among employees and leadership" (31.4%) and the perception of digital transformation as a cost center and not an investment (30.9%).
- Sixty-two percent of companies reported to be creating training programs to "modernize legacy or aging skill-sets," but only half (52.8%) are investing in new expertise and job creation.
- Digitally mature companies manage digital transformation from an enterprise-wide perspective, not just from the IT or marketing department alone.
- The majority of businesses interviewed (64.6%) are prioritizing "evolving customer and employee behaviors and preferences" as a key driver for digital transformation.




# #2 BRAND POSITIONING DEBUNKED: BRANDS MUST MANAGE THEIR MOTION RELATIVE TO EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

By: WE Communications





## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

This study examines brand motion and defines motion as "the relationship between forces your brand exerts vs. forces that are being exerted upon your brand." To better understand brand motion, WE Communications conducted an international study of consumers and B2B decision-makers. With the data, WE developed a "motion matrix" to harness the forces of motion for brand momentum.

## METHOD:

WE Communications studied six markets: Australia, China, Germany, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Within each market, they studied more than 3,000 consumers and 1,000 B2B decision-makers mapping both rational and emotional drivers.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Across all markets, consumers believe a brand can provide stability, even in "times of upheaval" (China, 90%; South Africa, 90%; Australia, 83%; US, 81%; UK, 75%; Germany, 66%).
- Consumers expect companies to deliver highly effective products and services and be active on issues important to customers.
- Nearly all respondents (98%) said if a brand steps out of line, they would gladly shame them.

# #3 STUDY SHOWS GENDER GAP HAS WIDENED SINCE 2015: PR LEADER PERFORMANCE SEES DECLINES IN WORK CULTURE, JOB ENGAGEMENT, AND JOB SATISFACTION

By: The Plank Center

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

This study, as first conducted in 2015, examines and "grades" public relations leaders in five areas: leadership performance, job engagement, trust in the organization, work culture, and job satisfaction. Performance areas showing a decline in grades for PR leaders should encourage the immediate need for greater communication within communications/PR teams.

## METHOD:

For this study, the same 39-question survey used for the 2015 report card was completed by 1,185 public relations leaders and professionals in the U.S. Most were the #1 or #2 communication professional in their organization. Fifty-four percent of the respondents were women.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Women in PR were less engaged, less satisfied, and less trusting of their organizations—and more critical of top leaders than men.
- Leadership performance and trust grades were left unchanged, but grades lowered for work culture, job engagement, and job satisfaction.
- There is still a large gap between leaders and employees. Top leaders rated their performance and other areas significantly higher than their employees.
- Communication is key. The existing culture must transform into a culture of communication. Results showed a lack of two-way communication, limited power-sharing, and a lack of diversity.

*LEADERSHIP REPORT CARD*

| | 2017 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|
| LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE | A-/C+ | A-/C+ |
| JOB ENGAGEMENT | B- | B+ |
| TRUST IN ORGANIZATION | C+ | C+ |
| JOB SATISFACTION | C+ | B- |
| CULTURE OF ORGANIZATION | C+ | B- |
| OVERALL | C+ | B- |

*A - EXCELLENT B - GOOD C - SATISFACTORY D - POOR F - FAILURE*

**Job Engagement of PR Professionals: 2017 vs. 2015**

| | Engaged | | Not Engaged | | Actively Disengaged | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographic** | **2017** | **2015** | **2017** | **2015** | **2017** | **2015** |
| Total respondents | 57.2% | 59.7% | 35.9% | 34.4% | 6.8% | 6.0% |
| Male professionals | 62.1% | 57.9% | 32.5% | 35.2% | 5.4% | 6.8% |
| Female professionals | 52.9% | 61.3% | 39.0% | 33.6% | 8.1% | 5.1% |
| Top leaders | 71.7% | 72.3% | 24.5% | 24.5% | 3.8% | 3.2% |
| Non-top leaders (all others) | 50.1% | 54.2% | 41.6% | 38.6% | 8.3% | 7.2% |
| Males (non-top leaders) | 54.7% | 52.7% | 38.7% | 39.6% | 6.6% | 7.6% |
| Females (non-top leaders) | 46.4% | 55.5% | 43.9% | 37.7% | 9.7% | 6.8% |

# #4 GENERALLY, AMERICANS ARE MORE CONCERNED, RATHER THAN EXCITED, ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF AUTOMATION ON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

By: Pew Research Center

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

As technologies in automation and AI are increasingly more present in society, PR professionals must understand public perceptions surrounding the changing automation landscape.

## METHOD:

Using four scenarios relating to automation technologies, the Pew Research Center surveyed 4,135 U.S. adults from May 1 – May 15, 2017.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- More than three-quarters of respondents (76%) expect a greater gap in economic inequality if robots and computers are able to perform many of the jobs currently completed by humans.
- Most respondents would be hesitant to use various automation technologies, such as ride in a driverless vehicle or use a robot caregiver.
- Most Americans (85%) would be in favor of policies that limit automation technology to primarily perform jobs that are dangerous or unhealthy to humans (in the event that robots and computers become capable of doing many human jobs).
- Only six percent reported automation has had an impact on them in the form of lost jobs or wages.

**One-in-five Americans find concept of machines doing most human jobs in the future to be extremely realistic**

*% of U.S. adults who say they have heard, read or thought ____ about the idea that robots and computers may be able to do many jobs currently done by humans*

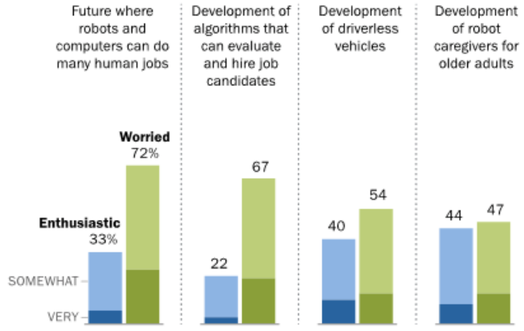

*% who say this concept seems ____ realistic*


Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted May 1-15, 2017.
"Automation in Everyday Life"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**More worry than optimism about potential developments in automation**

*% of U.S. adults who say they are enthusiastic or worried about ...*




Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted May 1-15, 2017.
"Automation in Everyday Life"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# #5

## COPING WITH THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND THE SOCIAL WEB RANKED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT STRATEGIC ISSUE FOR COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT UNTIL 2020

By: EUPRERA

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

The European Communications Monitor 2017 evaluates the perceptions of European communications professionals across a variety of areas such as strategic communication, social bots, strategic issues, hypermodernity, and benchmarking. This research shows how communications professionals are responding to our increasingly visual and hypermodern societies, and gives insight into the contribution of communications departments to organizational success.

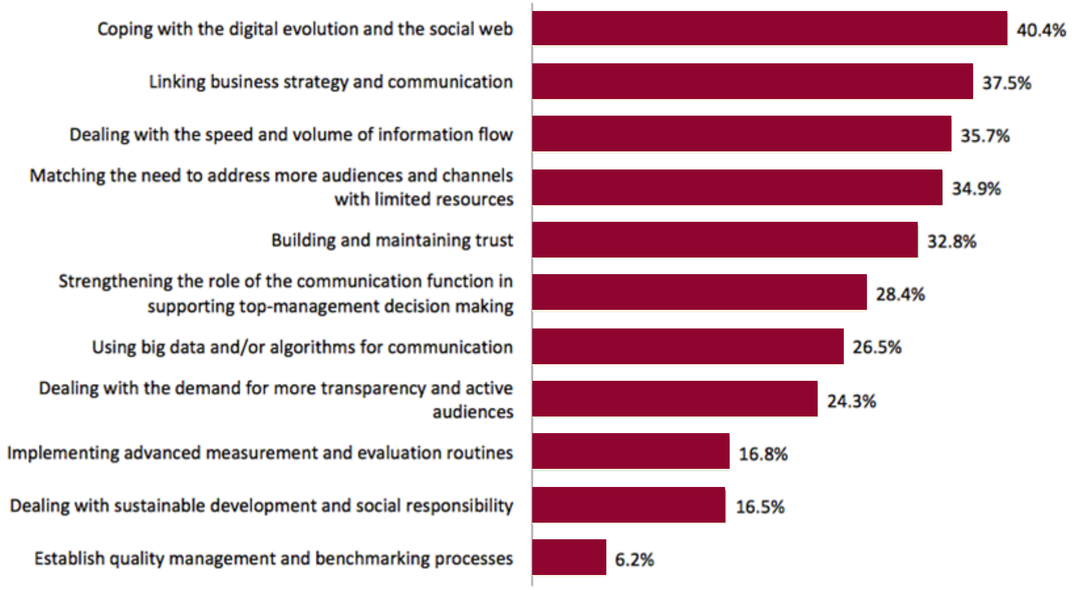
## METHOD:

For five weeks in March/April 2017, an online questionnaire consisting of 31 questions was completed by more than 3,387 communications professionals across 50 European countries.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Eighty-six percent of respondents reported their organizations use more visual elements (e.g., online videos, infographics) compared to three years ago.
- Nearly 90 percent agreed visual communication forces professionals to acquire new competencies. Only one in 10 rated themselves as highly skilled in visual communications.
- The majority of respondents are not using social bots (85%) and 73 percent agreed social bots present ethical challenges.
- Coping with the digital revolution and the social web (40.4%) was ranked as the most important strategic issue for communication management until 2020.
- Communications departments have fewer quality management processes than other functions such as marketing, sales, and customer relationship management.

Most important strategic issues for communication management until 2020



# #6 NO NEED TO FEAR WORKPLACE AUTOMATION: RESEARCH PREDICTS GLOBAL JOB CREATION MAY OUTPACE JOB DISPLACEMENT FROM AUTOMATION IN THE WORKPLACE

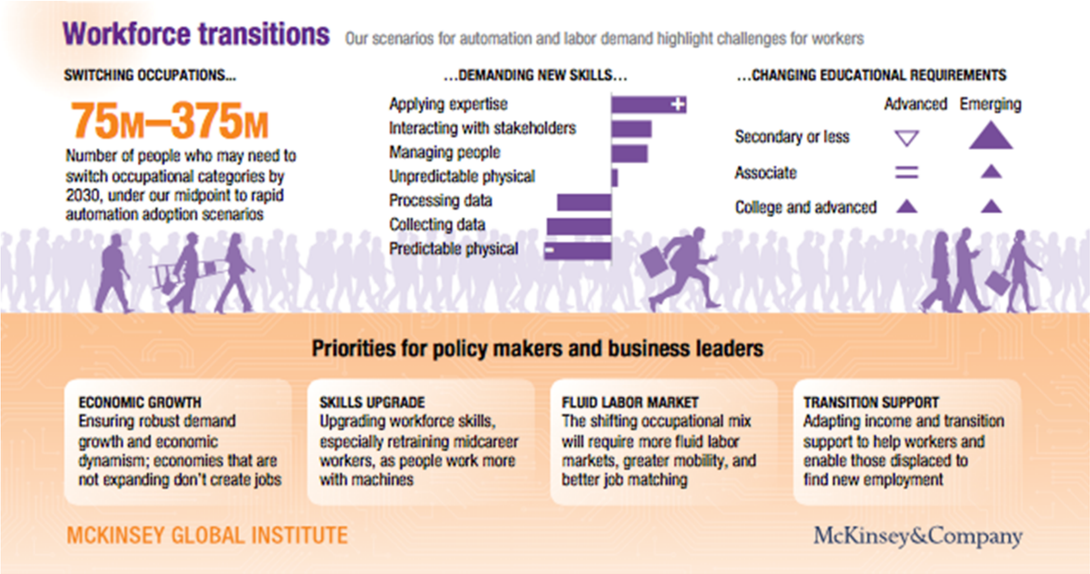
By: McKinsey Global Institute

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

An increase in workplace automation is expected to grow exponentially by 2030. However, factors—such as cost, labor-market dynamics, and social acceptance—will slow the pace of automation implementation, regardless if it is technically feasible. It is important to note that while workplace automation will displace millions workers globally, it may not lead to higher unemployment. In fact, based on spending and investment trends observed globally, this research identifies potential sources of new labor demand through 2030, and estimates job creation may net automation displacement.

## METHOD:

This research used multiple methodologies to determine the potential labor demand, work hours that could be automated, macroeconomic analysis, and skills and wage analysis from 2016 to 2030. Methodologies used included the study of 46 countries with databases published by institutions such as the World Bank and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014 O*Net database, population growth predictions from the United Nations, and McKinsey Global Growth Model projections.




## KEY FINDINGS:

- Globally, nearly half of all paid jobs could theoretically be automated by 2030.
- Despite automation displacement in the workplace, the demand for workers could increase as economies grow.
- By 2030, it is predicted that 75 million to 375 million workers may need to switch occupational categories and learn new skills.

# A STRONG EMPLOYER BRAND IS VITAL TO BETTER EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT, ENGAGEMENT, AND RETENTION

By: Weber Shandwick and KRC Research

#7

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

This study explores the credibility gap between how employers represent themselves publicly and how employees perceive their company. The research shows various employee patterns within aligned and unaligned employers, and discusses how employers can work to close the gap for better employee recruitment, engagement, and retention.

## METHOD:

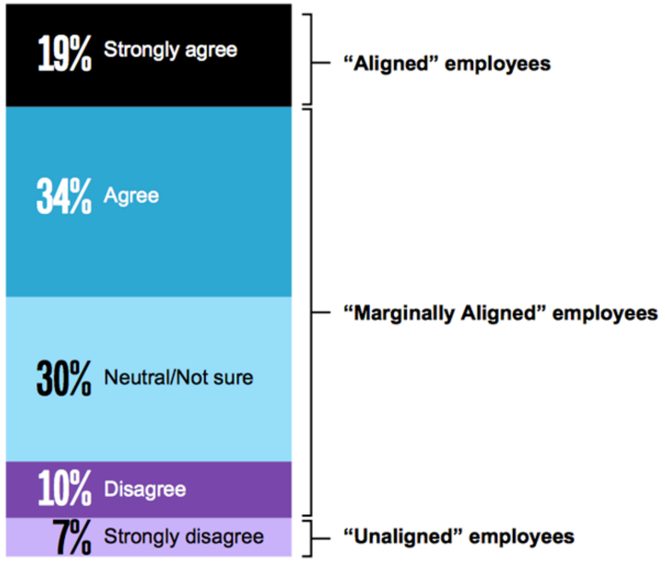
Weber Shandwick conducted a 20-minute online survey from June to August 2017. Respondents included 1,902 employed adults, ages 20 to 65, who worked at least 30 hours per week for a large organization with 500 or more employees in the U.S. and 250 or more in other countries. Additionally, 100 interviews were conducted in each of the 19 markets that were identified across North America, EMEA, Latin America and Asia Pacific;

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Globally, only 19 percent of employees perceived a strong alignment ("aligned") between what their employer says about itself and what their experience is working there.
- Employees from aligned employers are more likely than employees from organizations on average to:
  - recommend their employer as a place to work (76% vs. 54%)
  - encourage others to buy their company's products/services (59% vs. 49%)
  - post or share their praise online (41% vs. 23%)
  - continue to work for their employer for the next year (77% vs. 64%)
  - put more effort into their job than required (54% vs. 40%).
- To build a top employer brand, employers should lead with purpose and values, establish values-based leadership, and ensure employees know the organization's values.

"WHAT MY EMPLOYER PORTRAYS ABOUT ITSELF PUBLICLY MATCHES WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WORK THERE"

(Global Employees)



# #8 YOUNG ADULTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO RECALL THE SOURCE OF DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA THAN OLDER ADULTS

By: Pew Research Center

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

By exploring the habits of American's digital news consumption, Pew Research Center aims to provide better understanding of today's digital news environment. This research will allow practitioners to more effectively reach and share content to its publics.

## METHOD:

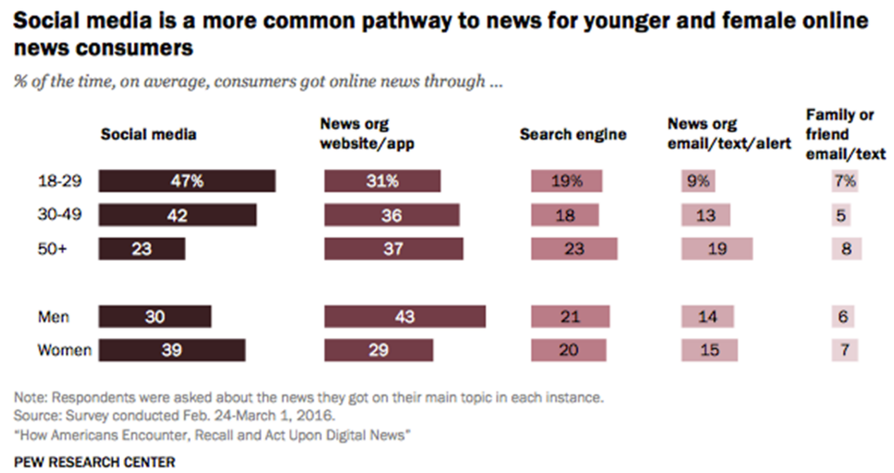
From February 24 to March 1, 2016, more than 2,000 U.S. adults who got at least some news online over the course of a week were asked twice a day whether they experienced news online within the past two hours. If they had, they were asked about their experience with that news. Fifty-one percent of 25,602 interviews included online news consumption.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- When following links, online news consumers could recall the name of the news outlet 56 percent of the time.
- The top two ways online news was accessed was through news websites (36%) and social media (35%).
- Certain topics in the news are more likely to be learned about through one methodover another. For example, finance news is more like to be accessed through a news website while community news is more likely to be accessed through social media.
- Younger adults are less likely to remember the source of news than older adults, and more likely to get their news from social media.

**Adults recalled the source of news as follows:**

18 to 29-year-olds (47%)
30 to 49-year-olds (57%)
50 years and older (61%)



# #9 LESS THAN HALF OF AMERICANS TRUST MAJOR COMPANIES WILL BEHAVE ETHICALLY

By: Public Affairs Council

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

This annual survey examines Americans' attitudes about business and government and reveals that Americans' lack confidence in elected government officials, major companies, and company leadership to act with honesty and operate with high ethical standards.

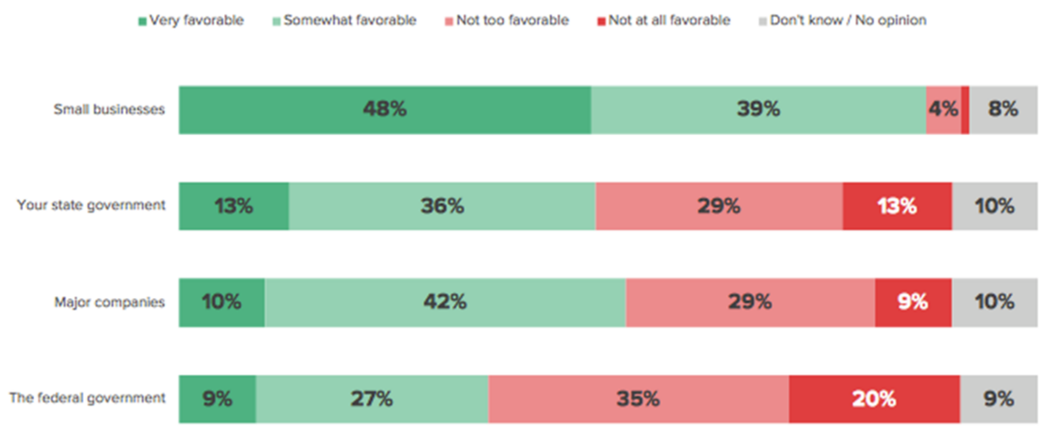
## METHOD:

The survey and interviews were conducted online from September 12-15, 2017, with a national sample of 2,201 adults. The results have a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Less than half of Americans (47%) have "some trust" or "a lot of trust" that major companies will behave ethically, and only nine percent say CEOs of major companies have high honesty and ethical standards.
- Forty-five percent of Americans say social media shapes their opinions of companies, and Americans ages 18 to 29 reported an even higher rate of influence at 61 percent.
- Americans are divided on whether government regulation of business is necessary for public good (or does more harm than good).
- While more than half (61%) of Americans think major companies are providing useful products and services, less than one-third think major companies are paying their employees fairly (31%), protecting the environment (30%), and paying executives fairly without overpaying them (22%).
- The majority of Trump voters (58%) and Clinton voters (59%) agree that elected officials in Washington D.C. are dishonest and unethical.

*Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following?*




Public Affairs Council

# #10 FACEBOOK NAMED AS THE TOP GATEKEEPER FOR NEWS

By: Ogilvy

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

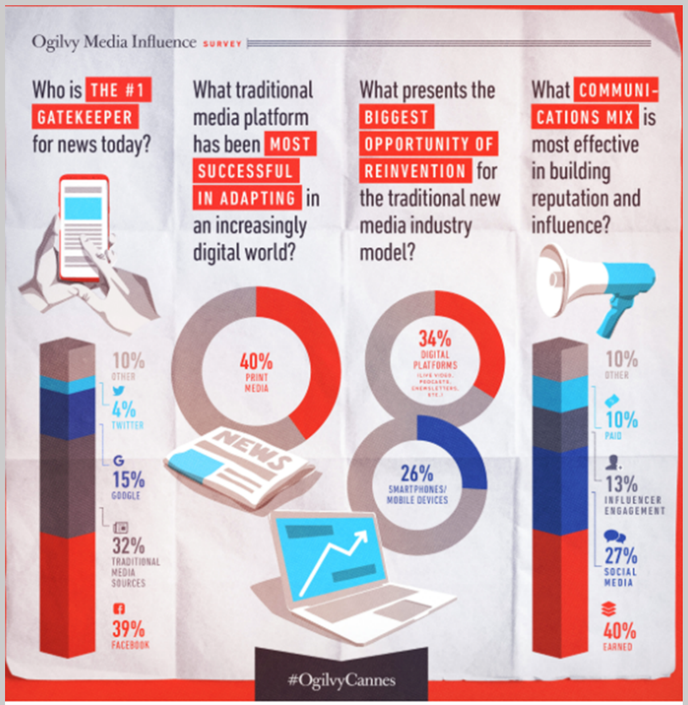
With this annual survey, Ogilvy assessed news media professionals' perspectives on how they are adapting to an increasingly digital world.

## METHOD:

The annual, qualitative survey was conducted with 255 news media professionals by phone and email in April 2017 across North America, Asia Pacific, and EMEA regions.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Facebook was ranked as the number one gatekeeper for news (39%).
- Respondents named print media (40%) as the most successful platform to adapt to the digital world.
- Journalists feel digital platforms, such as live video and podcasts (34%) as well as smartphones and mobile devices (26%), present the biggest opportunity to reinvent the traditional new media industry model.
- Globally, journalists view a combination of earned media, social media, and influencer engagement as the most effective mix for brand reputation.



# #11 STUDY SHOWS SOME U.S. JOURNALISTS HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE QUALITY OF CONTENT THEY RECEIVE FROM PR PROFESSIONALS

By: Cision

## WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT:

Conducted annually, this research gives insight surrounding the use, adoption, and effect of social media on journalists' work. By producing year-over-year comparisons, the study allows for patterns of growth and change to be identified, and deepens the industry's knowledge of social media's impact on the profession.

## METHOD:

For this annual report, Cision conducted an online survey during April and May 2017 of 257 U.S. journalists and media professionals.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Fifty-one percent of respondents were unsure if PR professionals provided high-quality content.
- More than half of respondents feel fake news is a serious problem in their area of journalism.
- Forty-two percent of respondents use five or more types of social media regularly.
- Journalists report that when using social media to accomplish professional tasks, the top three areas of importance are to publish and promote content, interact with the audience, and monitor other media and current events.
- Nearly half of all journalists interact with their audience daily on social media (47%), and feel they could not carry out their work without social media (48%).
- Experts and industry/professional contacts remain the preferred sources of information for U.S. journalists' news stories.

**Table 13 - Respondents views about PR professionals (percent of respondents)**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Always meets expectations | 1 percent | 30 percent | 42 percent | 21 percent | 6 percent |
| Reliable | 3 percent | 37 percent | 45 percent | 11 percent | 4 percent |
| Provide high quality content | 2 percent | 19 percent | 51 percent | 22 percent | 6 percent |

# IPR'S 2017 PUBLISHED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Since IPR did not include ANY of the research that we conducted in 2017, we thought we'd give you a summary of our major studies:

**The Science of Influence: How Social Media Affects Decision Making in the Healthcare, Travel, Retail and Financial Industries**
By Marcia DiStaso, Ph.D, University of Florida and Tina McCorkindale, Ph.D, Institute for Public Relations

**The 2017 IPR and PRSA Report: KSAs and Characteristics of Entry-Level PR Professionals**
By Institute for Public Relations and PRSA

**Five Ways to Spot 'Fake' Research**
By Sarab Kochhar, Ph.D., Institute for Public Relations

**Managing the Digital Age: A Dialogue with CCOs and CMOs**
By Peppercomm and the Institute for Public Relations

**A Time of Change: How CCOs and CMOs are Handling a New Presidential Administration**
By Peppercomm and the Institute for Public Relations

**TC Regulation of Native Advertising: How New Federal Rules Impact PR Practice**
By Cayce Myers, Ph.D, Virginia Tech

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