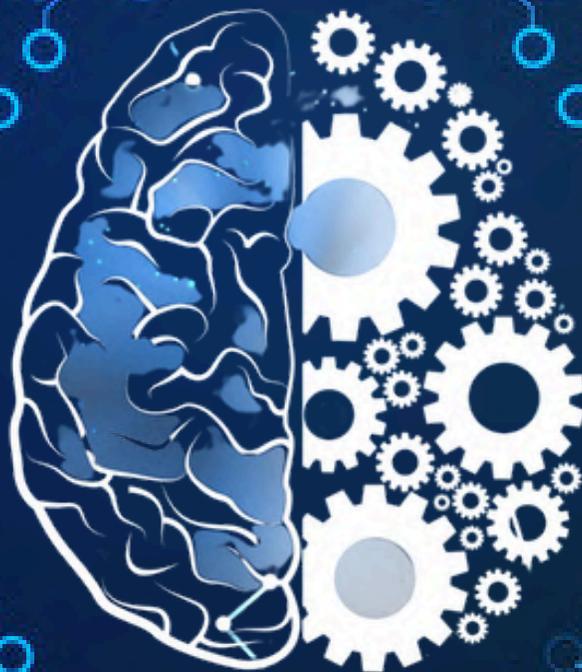


NAVIGATING THE CONVERGENCE OF TRUST AND TECHNOLOGY



2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



TRENDS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

2025 has been a transformational year for public relations. The rise of ChatGPT and generative AI is fundamentally changing how audiences discover and consume information.

As users migrate from traditional search listings to AI-powered interactions, the communications landscape has shifted dramatically—and public relations has moved to the center.

This evolution has done something remarkable: it's validated the enduring value of earned media. Yet the impact extends far beyond visibility.

AI is transforming how we generate ideas, develop strategies, and execute campaigns—automating tactical work while elevating the demand for human judgment and creativity.

Our partners have tackled these shifts head-on, exploring how communications professionals can harness AI's potential.

They also talk about the need to confronting one of the most pressing challenges of our time: combating misinformation and disinformation in an era where creating convincing content, images, and video requires nothing more than a prompt and seconds of processing time.

THE CONTINUED RISE AND DOMINANCE OF AI



THE ERA OF MASS ADOPTION HAS STARTED

The experimental phase is over. Artificial intelligence has moved from cautious testing to comprehensive integration across the public relations industry.

What began as experimental tools for drafting and research are now shaping every dimension of practice—from monitoring and analytics to strategic planning and content creation. This isn't gradual adoption. It's wholesale transformation happening in real time across our partner agencies worldwide.

With mass adoption of AI, what we are seeing is that **mastery** is what will separate leaders from followers. The challenge is how to integrate it strategically while preserving the human judgment, creativity, and ethical oversight that machines cannot replicate.

REPORT CONTENTS

- 2026 Predictions Overview
- PR Challenges That Lie Ahead
- AI's Impact the PR Industry
- How AI will Transform PR
- Content Types to Take Center Stage
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- Thought Leadership in a Fragmented Media Landscape
- The Fate of In-Person Events

PR CHALLENGES

PREDICTIONS ABOUT PR CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD

The practice of public relations has always been defined by its ability to navigate complexity—to translate corporate objectives into compelling narratives, to manage crises with clarity and speed, and to build trust in environments of uncertainty. But 2026 presents challenges of a different magnitude entirely.

Our partners identify a landscape where the very foundations of credibility are under assault. Trust must be earned and re-earned daily in an ecosystem flooded with AI-generated content. Authenticity becomes both the most valuable currency and the hardest attribute to prove. The margin between accurate information and convincing misinformation shrinks to nothing, while the speed required to respond accelerates beyond traditional communication cycles.

These aren't obstacles to be solved with better messaging or more sophisticated media strategies. They are structural challenges that demand new competencies, new systems, and new ways of thinking about what public relations fundamentally does. From demonstrating tangible value in an AI-augmented world to managing polarization as a standard business practice, from establishing credibility when every piece of content is suspect to finding the best ways to work with technology that's evolving faster than our ability to govern it—the challenges ahead require nothing less than a reimagining of our profession's role.

What follows are the unvarnished assessments from communications leaders operating at the forefront of these challenges. They don't offer easy answers, because there aren't any. Instead, they provide honest appraisals of what's coming and strategic frameworks for how we must respond. These perspectives reflect the reality that our partners face daily: the biggest challenges in 2026 won't be about perfecting our craft as it exists today, but about transforming it to meet demands we're only beginning to understand.

The stakes have never been higher. The path forward has never been less certain. And the need for strategic, ethical, principled communications leadership has never been more urgent.

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PR CHALLENGES

In 2026, one of the biggest challenges for public relations will be delivering your (client's) message in a transparent, trustworthy, and verifiable way.



ELIZABETH BLACK

Partner



Clients not understanding the value PR brings to a content ecosystem that is focused around AEO (Answer Search Optimization).



SERGE BECKERS

Managing Partner



One of the biggest challenges the PR industry will face in 2026 won't necessarily be earning coverage, but earning the belief and trust of your target audience in an increasingly fragmented and polarized world.



ROGER HURNI

Managing Partner

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

PR CHALLENGES

If 2025 was the year PR learned to coexist with machines, 2026 will be the year we must outrun them, ethically, strategically, and creatively. The biggest challenge ahead is managing truth at machine speed. Artificial intelligence will flood the ecosystem with faster, cheaper, and often more persuasive forms of misinformation. As communicators, we'll be measured not by how quickly we produce content, but by how effectively we protect credibility.

Public relations in 2026 will demand a new operational mindset: one that pairs the precision of data with the intuition of human judgment. The agencies that win will not be the ones that automate the most tasks, but those that cultivate trust velocity, identify falsehoods, clarify context, and mobilize accurate information before narratives calcify.

Our currency will be verified belief. 2026 will be the year the PR industry moves from storytelling to story stewardship.

Our job will be to manage truth, technology, and trust all at once, and to do so with the same creativity that once defined advertising and the same integrity that once defined journalism. PR will no longer sit at the end of the communications chain; it will become the connective tissue between data, emotion, and action.



STEFAN POLLACK

President



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PR CHALLENGES

We predict that polarization management will be as standard in leadership development as public-speaking or crisis communication. The question isn't whether your organization will face polarizing moments – it's whether your leaders will be equipped to transform those moments from threats into opportunities for stronger, more resilient teams.

The organizations that embrace this reality now won't just survive the age of amplified division. They'll master it.



MARIE-JOSÉE GAGNON

CEO & Founder



TAESUNG KIM

CEO



In an environment where positioning within specialized fields, competition in the PR field intensifies, and the distinction between competitors and collaborators becomes increasingly blurred, PR requires ever-more specialized capabilities.

Therefore, I believe each agency must further strengthen its expertise.

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PR CHALLENGES

There's a question, if we're not careful, a reduction in headcount and a reduction in number of agencies. And I hope that isn't the case.

The next big thing will be a change in business practice where technology and AI is embraced, used appropriately, not seen as a cheap way of monitoring and measuring because it's neither of those things, but will be seen as a way to help us accelerate our work, do our work better, free up some time and allow us to become strategic partners, the co creators of value for our organizations that we deserve to be.



PATRIK SCHOBER

COO



MATT KUCHARSKI

President



Harnessing AI in a way that highlights the value of the function vs. devaluing the function.

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PR CHALLENGES

The largest challenge for public relations in 2026 will be rebuilding trust in a world that's faking it fast. By 2026, the biggest challenge won't be how to get attention — it'll be how to prove authenticity when everything from videos to quotes to photos can be generated in seconds. As AI floods the field with content, brands and agencies will need to double down on credibility, transparency, and truth.

At Vault, we believe the agencies that win won't be the loudest. They'll be the most verifiably real. We'll stand out by pairing data-driven storytelling with a human heartbeat, grounding every message in proof, empathy, and purpose.



JESSICA PHELAN

President & COO



FOR IDEAS THAT TAKE OFF®



CYRILLE ARCAMONE

Founding Partner



The challenge for public relations professionals is to continue fostering a well-informed, reasoned, and pluralistic public debate among public and private-sector stakeholders—companies, industry bodies, and associations—in an environment increasingly shaped by oversimplification, conflation, and misinformation.

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PR CHALLENGES

AI and misinformation. AI bots and AI generated content is making it increasingly difficult to judge fake from real.

PR professionals will need to triage what is real and what is made up to better manage messaging and to provide factual information so that consumers/audiences can make an informed and knowledgeable decision about an issue, product or company.



CHRIS BALDWIN

Chief Visionary Officer & Founder



MARIANA MIRRHA

Partner



The biggest challenge will be maintaining credibility and human connection in an environment increasingly dominated by automation and content generated by AI. The public will seek authenticity and emotional resonance, as well as reliable content.

Content personalization, targeted at specific audiences, will be key. As professionals, we will need to know how to balance the high performance that AI provides, which is quite useful in our sector, with the need for authentic and empathetic content to reach the audiences our clients desire.

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PR CHALLENGES

PR practitioners, and the marketing and communications industries as a whole, will continue to evolve in the needs and expectations of how AI will change how people get information. As more general users evolve behaviors away from search engines, so will more opportunities arise for brands to connect outside of Google's sphere.



JESSICA GREATHOUSE
COO



JOHANNES MARTSCHIN
CEO



The central challenge will be maintaining trust and reputation in an AI-driven, fragmented media landscape. What we're experiencing is almost paradoxical: while AI-generated content becomes the norm, there's simultaneously a growing hunger for authentic, human stories.

We see algorithmic volatility as particularly critical – over half of agency marketers cite constant changes in search and social media algorithms as their biggest challenge. On top of that, by 2026, search engines will lose about 25 percent of their market share to AI chatbots. Anyone not recognized as a credible source risks becoming simply invisible.

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PR CHALLENGES

Demonstrate the value of PR work in the overall communication process of organizations. In an age where marketing tends to take over from communication, public relations plays an increasingly central role in building authentic and strong storytelling.



CAROLINE PRINCE

Managing Director



REGINA BRUSCHKE

Partner



Earning trust in an era of AI-driven content overload: With AI generating more press material, social content and even crisis responses, journalists and audiences are becoming increasingly skeptical of generic, machine-made communication.

PR professionals will need to prove relevance, authenticity and responsibility through precise storytelling, personalized journalist relations, transparent data and visible human accountability. The challenge is no longer just to communicate fast, but to communicate credibly. And to show why communication deserves to be trusted in the first place.

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PR CHALLENGES

The defining challenge for PR in 2026 will be to rebuild trust as the foundation of communication. We believe trust is no longer earned through messages, but through structure – through consistent transparency, open dialogue and visible accountability.

PR must move from storytelling to Trust Architecture: designing relationships that can withstand uncertainty and change.



PATRICK MILO

Managing Director, Partner

GRIP



ANDRAS R NAGY

Managing Director

**PR
BK**
COMMUNICATIONS

The biggest challenge is going to be how the establish and maintain authenticity and credibility in corporate and brand communication. Due to the increasing use of different AI applications content creation is going to become virtually limitless.

This will highly influence the attention span (going to be extremely short) and the stimulus threshold (going to increase ever higher) of consumers. Companies and brands will have to fight fiercerly for the attention of people day-by-day.

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PR CHALLENGES

An economic downturn means many companies, brands, and organizations will struggle to stay in business, let alone grow or increase profitability. This will almost certainly lead to a "brain drain" as veterans and entry-level workers alike leave the industry, voluntarily or due to staffing reductions.

Senior leaders may decide to retire earlier, and younger workers may explore going back to school or trying a new career altogether. We lose both institutional knowledge and promising new leaders. As the kids say, we're losing recipes.



JACKIE LIU

Senior Vice President



TONY FANIZZI

Content Marketing Lead



Quality search results and receiving accurate, up-to-date information in light of the increasing abundance of AI-generated content.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

PR CHALLENGES

One of the biggest challenges will be to find the best ways to work with AI.



TEA LINDROOS

Communications & PR Advisor



KAYLEIGH HANLIN

Account Service Lead



The biggest challenge for PR in 2026 will likely be maintaining trust and authenticity in an environment dominated by algorithmic content and audience fatigue.

As AI-generated messaging and influencer partnerships proliferate, audiences will become increasingly skeptical of polished narratives. PR professionals will need to ensure messaging feels human, transparent, and resonates emotionally.

From an account service standpoint, this looks like helping client build credibility through earned trust, integrating data-driven insights and managing cross-functional collaboration across PR, social, content and paid, for a cohesive and trustworthy narrative.

AI'S IMPACT

AI'S IMPACT THE PR INDUSTRY

The question is no longer whether artificial intelligence will transform public relations—the question is how. And, how that transformation will scale as the industry tries to harness its potential while preserving what makes communications fundamentally human.

Our partners report a dramatic shift already underway: AI is moving from experimental tool to being embedded in daily work. What began as cautious adoption of chatbots for drafting and research has evolved into comprehensive integration across workflows—from media monitoring and sentiment analysis to strategic planning and predictive analytics.

Yet the narrative of AI "replacing" PR professionals misses the point entirely. As our partners consistently observe, artificial intelligence is revealing rather than obscuring the unique value of human expertise. By automating repetitive tasks—monitoring, reporting, basic content production—AI liberates communications professionals to focus on what machines cannot replicate: strategic interpretation, cultural nuance, and authentic relationship building.

As entry-level roles diminish, agency staffing models are evolving as the demand for strategic thinking intensifies. Service offerings are expanding beyond traditional boundaries as AI enables new capabilities in real-time sentiment analysis, predictive reputation management, and hyper-personalized content.

Client expectations are shifting from "show me coverage" to "show me clarity"—from measuring outputs to demonstrating strategic value that no algorithm can deliver. But this transformation also carries profound implications for how we develop talent, structure teams, and define professional competency. A generation of "AI conductors," skilled at knowing when to delegate to technology and when human wisdom is irreplaceable.

Our partners describe not a single future, but multiple pathways for how AI will reshape services, staffing, strategy, and the fundamental value proposition of public relations.



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TEA LINDROOS
Communications & PR
Advisor



AI will have a huge impact on all fields of life. As with internet and social media, there are a lot of threats but also great rewards to obtain. People will start using new tools anyway, so as PR professionals we need to be on top of those both and make sure AI is used as any new technology: responsibly, openly and transparently. The EU AI Act creates a solid frame for us in Europe and helps enhancing data security as well as helps preventing threats to fundamental rights.



MARIE-JOSÉE
GAGNON
CEO & Founder



It will shape staffing on multiple level: we will look for connectors, people who love connect people, information, etc. We will look for people who are fluent with AI, and eager to use it more. Services will be focused on developing human skills, real-time communication.



WAYNE SILASI
Digital Marketing Lead



In 2026, public relations will become even more essential as artificial intelligence and large language models (LLMs) continue to shape how information is found, shared, and trusted. As AI tools increasingly curate content and generate answers for users, they prioritize credible, third-party sources—such as respected media outlets, thought leaders, and authoritative publications—over brand-owned websites. This shift means that earned media and reputation management will play a larger role in shaping public perception and discoverability. Brands that invest in authentic storytelling, credible visibility, and consistent media engagement will be far more likely to be surfaced by AI systems as trustworthy voices in their industries.

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SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



From a crisis communication perspective: AI will continue to help people create fake news and prioritize topics, angles and speaking points that in 'normal journalistic circumstances' would be formulated differently or would not have been formulated at all. AI will continue to play an important role in creating content that looks newsworthy and realistic, but isn't. AI will also help people distribute this type of content.



JESSICA PHELAN
President & COO



I think we are all hopeful that AI will take over the tedious parts of PR — the media scans, reports, and first-draft tasks that eat up hours — freeing people to do what humans do best: connect, interpret, and create. This should mean we less time pulling lists and more time analyzing insights. Our teams will grow stronger at AI-assisted strategy, data-driven creative, and storytelling that bridges machine learning with human meaning.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



AI will expand PR agency services allowing us to speed up delivery while providing deeper, more indepth insights and knowledge. I also see AI creating opportunities to retrain staff on other areas of service delivery and experience. By allowing us to use AI for repetitive activities, we will improve efficiency and client value while spending time on the activities that will truly produce results.

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CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



AI is just a tool. It will save time when it comes to writing or organizing ideas. But it can never replace knowledge and expertise. The main challenge is to include humans in AI.



PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner



AI will reshape PR by shifting value from output to orientation. As automation scales content production, the human role moves towards curating meaning, context and responsibility. We understand that the future of PR will depend on how we use AI – not to replace human thinking, but to enhance relevance and deepen trust.



STEFAN POLLACK
President



AI will continue to reshape the architecture of PR agencies from the inside out. The role of technology in 2026 won't be to replace people; it'll be to redefine the value of human expertise. Entry-level production work, monitoring, drafting, and clipping will largely become automated. But that doesn't mean the industry will shrink; it means it will evolve into strategic teams that can interpret, apply, and guide insights at a higher level.

Client expectations are shifting from “show me coverage” to “show me clarity.” AI will enable agencies to move from reactive PR to predictive communication, anticipating issues before they trend and mapping stakeholder sentiment in real time. What once took days will happen in minutes. The winners will be those who use these tools not just to see faster, but to decide better. Agencies like ours will continue to build hybrid models, part consultancy, part creative studio, anchored by data-driven foresight and human storytelling. AI won't just change how we communicate; it will redefine what it means to be a communicator.

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AI IMPACT ON PR



MATT KUCHARSKI
President



AI will make good PR people better and bad PR people worse. It'll put a spotlight on the reason WHY we do what we do and less on the activity to get there.



CYRILLE
ARCAMONE
Founding Partner



Generative AI is rapidly transforming public relations, with fast-moving changes and impacts that are still hard to fully predict. Today, its main areas of use include idea generation, iterative brainstorming, writing and creative support, and data research. At this stage, junior consultants are the most affected in terms of both role and headcount.



JOHANNES
MARTSCHIN
CEO



AI is evolving from assistant to strategic partner. The transformation goes far beyond writing press releases – AI systems will predict reputation risks before they even arise, analyze journalist preferences for tailored pitches, and even forecast which stories might go viral. New service areas include real-time sentiment analysis, AI-powered journalist matching, and scenario simulations that predict campaign success. In the DACH region, leading agencies like Edelman and Weber Shandwick are already using AI to significantly boost efficiency and brand perception. For staffing, PR professionals are becoming "AI conductors" who know when to delegate tasks to machines and when human wisdom is irreplaceable. While over 60% of agencies automate repetitive tasks like reporting, humans focus on what machines can't do: ethical judgment, cultural insight, and genuine relationship building. Agencies increasingly need specialists in "context engineering" who enrich prompts with brand-specific data to achieve truly personalized results.

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ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



As AI continues to evolve, it has become a critical component in how public relations will deliver services to brands for reputation management, especially given AI's confirmation bias.



ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



AI will continue to become embedded in the tech stack of how we all work, from workflows to outcome modeling to decision support (although we'll still need human oversight), with productivity gains still providing great benefits.



PATRIK SCHOBER
Partner



AI is set to become a dominant force in the PR industry by revolutionizing the way content is created and distributed. In earned media, AI will play a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing brand reputation. Striking a balance between human creativity and AI optimization is essential to achieve the best results. Generative Search Engine Optimization (GEO) is another aspect that will gain increasing importance. PR content will be increasingly optimized to be easily discoverable by AI systems. Research shows that many communication managers still rely on outdated metrics and struggle with effectively measuring results. This highlights the need for more modern and transparent approaches in PR. Thus, the PR industry will serve as a bridge between innovation and impact.

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ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director



AI continue to have a serious influence on our industry. Basic services will become faster and more or less automated (e.g. copywriting of short-format texts, reporting etc.), strategic services will be more valuable (strategic planning etc.). New services will be born such as helping clients in the implementation of AI-based automations. On the other hand entry level jobs will be eaten by AI, and it is going to be harder for young generations to enter our industry.



JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO



Clients will look to their agencies for strategic problem solving that can not yet be duplicated by AI, while executional tasks become more and more commoditized. Agencies will stand out based on their critical thinking and innovative ideas.



MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



Artificial intelligence is already transforming the PR Industry and supporting us in routine tasks such as media monitoring, coverage analysis, and writing simpler content, allowing professionals to focus on strategy, creativity, and relationship management. In addition, in the coming years it won't be only necessary for brands and executives to be visible on Google but also be referenced by AI. New services may emerge, and we'll be able to get more insights from AI, but the human aspect of the profession will continue to be important in the coming years, including for supervising what AI is producing. Artificial intelligence still can't do everything, and it won't be able to.

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REGINA BRUSCHKE
Partner



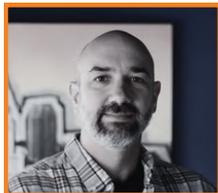
AI will redefine PR, but not replace it. AI does automate large parts of today's PR workflow: media monitoring, first drafts of press texts, stakeholder analysis, reporting and even personalized outreach. This shifts PR from a service of production to a service of interpretation, strategy and relationship-building. Services will move up the value chain: Clients will expect fewer press releases and more insight, narrative development, reputation management and stakeholder engagement. AI will handle volume, PR will need to handle relevance. Staffing will change, too: Teams will become smaller, more strategic and more hybrid. Data analysts will sit next to storytellers, AI tool specialists next to media relations experts. Junior roles focused on execution will shrink; advisory, creative and ethical roles will grow.



TAESUNG KIM
President



This impact is already evident, and it will likely intensify in the future. Fewer workers will be able to perform more tasks, and AI's use is increasing beyond information processing to more creative areas like planning.



TONY FANIZZI
Content Marketing
Lead



AI is helping marketers uncover deeper insights and allowing topics to be more granular and relevant for detailed searches. The need for authentic creativity will remain at the top, but efficiencies in content creation are creating new expectations regarding speed and cost of delivered work.



AI TRANSFORMATION

WAYS AI IS GOING TO TRANSFORM PR SERVICES

The most relevant question facing pr firms now is how—specifically, tangibly, operationally—artificial intelligence will reshape the daily practice of communications.

Our partners describe a transformation that's less about wholesale replacement and more about strategic reallocation: AI takes on the repetitive, time-consuming tasks that have long consumed disproportionate resources. This shift will free up professionals to focus on thinking that drives real value.

The shift is already visible across our Worldcom PR Group —from automated monitoring and sentiment analysis to AI-assisted content creation and predictive analytics.

But the most significant change isn't about efficiency alone. It's about fundamentally reimagining what's possible in public relations. AI enables capabilities that were previously unattainable: hyper-personalized content at scale, real-time trend forecasting, predictive reputation management, and granular audience insights that inform strategy rather than just measure results.

The technology doesn't just provide speed. It affords the opportunity to work smarter, see further, and deliver value that clients couldn't access before. As our partners emphasize, the tools provide leverage, but humans provide direction. Success requires understanding not just what AI can do, but when to use it, how to guide it, and when to override it in favor of human insight.

What follows are specific applications our partners see transforming PR practice: from automating foundational tasks to generating strategic insights, from enabling mass customization to supporting real-time decision-making. These aren't theoretical possibilities—they're practical uses reshaping how our agency partners operate and deliver value.

Moving further away from mass marketing to close to precision communication, AI isn't changing what public relations aims to achieve; it's exponentially expanding what is possible to achieve.

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REGINA BRUSCHKE
Partner



1. Automating the groundwork: AI will take over monitoring, sentiment analysis, drafting releases, Q&A documents, speech outlines and even personalised pitches. This frees up time for strategy, creativity and stakeholder relations.

2. Making PR more predictive: With real-time data and risk modelling, AI will help anticipate public reactions, identify emerging issues and test narratives before they go live. Crisis communication will shift from reactive to pre-emptive.

3. Personalising at scale: AI will enable hyper-targeted communication, tailoring messages to individual journalists, influencers or stakeholder groups based on their interests, tone and past interactions. But the final judgement and relationship-building remain human.



PATRIK SCHOBER
Partner



AI tools, when combined with human creativity, can lead to smarter strategies and more efficient time management. Instead of fearing AI, PR professionals must take the lead in demonstrating how it can build trust and support long-term business goals.



CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



AI will transform daily work by saving time on repetitive tasks with little added value.

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MATT KUCHARSKI
President



It will manifest itself across the board - from research to insights to content to connectivity to measurement and monitoring. It's not just searching for information or writing rough drafts using ChatGPT



JESSICA PHELAN
President & COO



In 2026, AI will sit quietly behind nearly every workflow: supporting copy, summarizing media coverage, predicting buyer intent, even helping tailor tone and timing for each audience.

For us, AI isn't the star of the show, it's the crew behind the curtain. It'll help Vault teams work smarter, personalize faster, and measure deeper. I don't see it replacing our people. I see it amplifying their expertise.



JOHANNES
MARTSCHIN
CEO



The fundamental shift is from mass marketing to individualized communication. AI enables "customized PR" for niche audiences across diverse channels with tailored content formats. In practice, this means: predictive trend forecasting through social media scanning identifies emerging topics before they peak. In crisis management, leading brands use AI to identify potential problems before they escalate – AI tools scan social sentiment and detect controversies often hours before mainstream media. Hyper-personalization suddenly becomes scalable: successful PR professionals in 2026 know not only which beat a journalist covers, but also how they approach stories and what time of day they prefer to receive pitches.

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MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



The key to AI truly being revolutionary in the sector lies in the data that feeds it. The increase in available tools is interesting, but there is still a gap in the quality of outputs. However, AI can evolve as a support tool as well as a more autonomous tool. It will increasingly help analyze public sentiment and reputational risks, for example. In crisis communication, AI-based monitoring systems can detect anomalies before they escalate, allowing for preventative responses. AI will continue to make us work faster, but there is still an important quality gap that needs to be filled.



ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



The PR industry needs to get on board with helping clients see the value of third-party source reputation management. With traditional search in decline, an AI search strategy based on quality sources is going to be a key initiative for brands.



TAESUNG KIM
President



As everyone embraces AI, deeper thinking is needed to achieve more unique results. PR work is becoming more expansive and demanding deeper expertise. In particular, companies like mine that provide financial communications services require more information gathering and analysis, including corporate performance, market analysis, and economic outlook, and the insights to leverage this information. I believe this trend will accelerate further.

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ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director



The current trends will be stronger: AI is going to be a widely used tool in the automation of simple tasks and processes like reporting. At the same time, due to the rapidly increasing capacity of different AI models, AI is going to be an even more useful partner in managing complex tasks (e.g. planning and managing research projects etc.) and creating complex content pieces. AI - if used well - can develop from a simple tool to a useful and versatile working partner.



JACKIE LIU
Senior Vice
President



The ability to create *anything* with AI has created a new genre of internet content that is entering the zeitgeist. Everything is a meme now; every fragment of culture can be morphed into a sharable piece of content that will be viewed, picked apart, and reshaped into something worse. This is the era of AI slop. And remarkably, it's an integral part of how audiences communicate, engage, and react. Therefore, PR professionals need to understand and get comfortable with this new playbook.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



PR has changed dramatically with the rise of social media, influencers and news outlets in place of traditional mainstream media. With so many outlets available, AI will help PR transition to serving the individual needs of each channel by providing more insight into audience, content material and effectiveness.

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MARIE-JOSÉE GAGNON
CEO & Founder



It will help us generate more value: insights, personalized data. Better monitoring. We will become more strategic.



WAYNE SILASI
Digital Marketing Lead



AI-powered sentiment analysis is changing how PR teams track public opinion. Instead of manually reading posts and articles, tools like Meltwater, Brandwatch, Sprinklr, and Cision quickly analyze online conversations to show whether people feel positive, negative, or neutral. This helps PR professionals spot trends, measure impact, and respond to issues before they grow, keeping brands informed and proactive.



SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



The tedious or time-consuming tasks, e.g. written and visual content creation, project management, administrative tasks, campaign and plan development can (and will) probably be done by AI tools or prompts. The consultancy tasks will not, at least not in the very short term; here, human expertise, insights, interaction and deliberation are crucial. Campaigns and plans developed with AI will still need a very careful edit, and will need the proper (consultant's) basis insights for them to become pertinent.

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TEA LINDROOS
Communications & PR
Advisor



AI will help to automate mundane, repetitive tasks and free up time for higher level, value-added thinking that is assisted by AI for research and outside perspectives.



PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner



AI will transform PR through precision, not volume. Data and automation will support better listening, faster reaction and sharper insight. We see the opportunity in integrating AI as a tool that enhances analysis and anticipation while maintaining human judgment and empathy. The real innovation will lie in defining clear purpose and boundaries for its use.



ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



As AI continues to improve, it will evolve to become the backbone of research, content creation, measurement, sentiment analysis and workflow management. Predictive analytics will help spot issues early on, but human oversight will still be a critical part of the process in order to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

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JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO



AI will help to automate mundane, repetitive tasks and free up time for higher level, value-added thinking that is assisted by AI for research and outside perspectives.



STEFAN POLLACK
President



AI won't just support PR, it will reframe it as an intelligence discipline. In 2026, public relations will operate with the same sophistication as a mission control center, constantly scanning for shifts in public sentiment, spikes in misinformation, and opportunity gaps.

Imagine an always-on brand radar that flags narrative drift before it becomes a crisis, or a generative co-pilot that analyzes audience data to craft personalized story arcs for each stakeholder group. These tools won't write the story for us; they'll clear the noise so we can write the right one.

AI will also bring a new level of precision to thought leadership. Data-mining engines can now surface emerging themes before they trend, allowing brands and executives to enter conversations at the moment of curiosity, not fatigue. Combined with human insight, this means PR professionals will evolve from message distributors into message designers, architects of context and meaning.



VIDEO AND AUDIO CONTENT

THE SHIFT IN CONTENT AUTHENTICITY

Video and audio have dominated digital communications for years, but 2026 marks a pivotal evolution in how these formats will be created, consumed, and valued. The shift isn't about technology enabling better production—it's about audiences demanding more authentic connection.

Our partners report a paradox at the heart of this transformation: as AI tools make professional-quality video and audio production accessible to virtually anyone, the competitive advantage is shifting to authenticity.

Auto-editing, voice cloning, script generation, and virtual presenters are democratizing broadcast-level content creation. Yet simultaneously, audiences are becoming more discerning, more skeptical, and more hungry for the unvarnished human presence that AI cannot replicate.

The dominance of short-form video continues unabated—platforms prioritizing quick, digestible content still capture the lion's share of attention.

However, behind-the-scenes glimpses, live recordings, transparent labeling of AI-generated elements, and visible human presence are becoming the price of entry as deepfakes and synthetic content proliferate.

Audio, particularly podcasts, continues its remarkable growth trajectory—especially in B2B contexts where depth and expertise matter more than visual spectacle. The format's intimacy creates connection that video often cannot match, while its flexibility allows audiences to engage during activities where screens aren't accessible.

The technology enables unprecedented scale, but success in 2026 will require strategic restraint—knowing when to produce, what to automate, and where human presence is non-negotiable.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director



I can see two separate paths for audiovisual content. Due to the shortening attention span of consumers shorter formats (YouTube Shorts, Insta Reels, TikTok) continue to be on the increase. At the same time, longer format podcasts/vodcasts (45mins or more) also will have future. However the increasing transcribing/summarizing capacities of AI models, the actual listening time could be way shorter. People are interested to the information but quite often do not have the patience...As for the production side, AI is also going to gain more territory. Strong content brands can effectively stay competitive, but smaller content creators could be damaged on the long run.



JESSICA PHELAN
President & COO



Short-form video will stay the most powerful format, especially when it's quick, useful, and true to a brand's personality. AI will streamline editing, captioning, and even localization, but the content that lands will still feel authentic and unpolished enough to trust.

For clients, our advice will remain the same: show up as real people. Don't just chase trends. Use every format to strengthen relationships and add value, not volume.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



In Brazil, video and audio content are highly desirable, as Brazilians are among the audiences that spend the most time on social media. Brands will increasingly expand the use of these formats, but they will need to differentiate their content, which is becoming homogenized. Short, easily consumable videos that don't require a high level of attention should remain popular. Podcasts and interactive audio experiences continue to be important in the market, including in B2B contexts. But there is also a critical point: It will be necessary to be careful with an excessive amount of synthetic content, since people want to connect with other people.



CYRILLE
ARCAMONE
Founding Partner



An endless multiplication of formats and variations, enhanced support for creativity and experimentation, and a potential reduction in production-related costs



SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



Video and audio are more versatile and become more flexible in deployment than ever before. Content in both formats can be created quicker and at much lower costs than ever before. My prediction is that we therefore will see much more of both, in omnichannel use.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner

GRIP

Video and audio will become essential to brand communication. The trend is shifting from polished production to authentic connection. We believe the opportunity lies in creating content that brings people closer to ideas and values – through human stories, meaningful dialogue and consistent presence across channels.

So it's not about visibility; it's about credibility.



STEFAN POLLACK
President

 the pollack group

We're moving from a content era to an experience era, and nothing delivers experience like sound and motion. In 2026, video and audio won't be optional; they'll be the connective tissue of every communication strategy.

The smartest brands will build ecosystems where short-form video sparks awareness, long-form video deepens trust, and podcasts sustain dialogue. Tools that once required studios and editors will live inside our browsers, letting agencies create high-quality, multi-format content at the speed of news.

But more importantly, authenticity will become the dominant aesthetic. Highly produced videos will give way to unscripted moments and conversational storytelling. Audio, particularly podcasts, will remain the most intimate format for thought leadership; it's where nuance lives. That's why at The Pollack Group, we doubled down on imPRessions Studio, the future of influence sounds like a human voice telling the truth.

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MATT KUCHARSKI
President



Video will continue to increase in popularity and AI video generation platforms like Sora will have an impact.



WAYNE SILASI
Digital Marketing Lead



The Gemini 2.5 Flash Image to VEO3 workflow and similar tools simplify video production by connecting intelligent image generation with real-time editing. The results are finally ready for prime time, helping marketing teams be more nimble and opening up new opportunities for creative storytelling and faster content creation.



REGINA BRUSCHKE
Partner



In 2026, short-form video and podcast-style audio will continue to dominate attention. But the way they're produced and consumed will shift: Auto-editing, voice cloning, script generation and virtual presenters make video and audio faster and cheaper to produce. Even small teams will create broadcast-level content. However, audiences will value transparency with behind-the-scenes formats, live recordings, clear labelling of AI-generated content and real human presence as deepfakes and synthetic voices spread. Therefore audio and video will be used less for polished corporate image and more for direct dialogue, thought leadership and showing "real people behind the brand."

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



Short-form video remains dominant – vertical content will become a cornerstone of every brand strategy in 2026, even in B2B. The biggest shift is hyper-personalization at scale. Instead of a "one-size-fits-all" film, brands now produce multiple versions with adapted graphics, voiceovers, and storylines for different customer groups – thanks to AI tools without exploding budgets. Interactive video experiences become standard: shoppable content allows customers to click on products directly in the video and purchase immediately.

In audio content, the micro-media landscape is flourishing – specialized podcasts often have deeply engaged audiences. An appearance on a specialized industry podcast can offer significantly more value than coverage in major newspapers because you reach exactly the target audience. Live streaming becomes interactive: real-time Q&A, polls, and participatory features will simply be expected in 2026.



Video and even audio content formats will suffer from the skepticism that comes with misused AI-generated content. Seeing isn't always believing. However, AI tools are reaching new levels of realism and will continue to influence design, concepts, and content in a bigger way.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



Platforms will continue to push short "snackable" videos for fast-moving feeds and short attention spans, but there will be a place for more mid-form content that runs a few minutes in length and dives deeper into info or stories for niche audiences who want more.



CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



The use of these formats will increase significantly. However, everyone will need to learn how to verify their authenticity.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



Speed will continue to increase with less time spent on coming up with the idea and implementing it. We have B2B, B2C and now B2AI. SEO/GEO will play an even greater role in product and service selection with the influence on search engines decreasing dramatically. We're quickly going away from awareness and purchase decision research to simply purchase. This will change everything about the online shopping experience.

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ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



Video and audio have now become critical components in content development, search strategy and AI training that brands need to embrace.



JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO



Technology will continue to advance and become more and more realistic. In the next year, I think we will see less "AI blunders" (humans with 7 fingers) and much more accuracy.



TAESUNG KIM
President



In the past, video and audio utilization required outsourcing or specialized expertise. However, today, it's become easier for even people without any technical experience to develop and use content. This will lead to both quantitative and qualitative growth in video and audio.

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ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



PR needs to proactively help clients understand the difference between misinformation and disinformation while navigating the complexities of managing the issues surrounding them. Each brand will have their own unique set of challenges that will require a bespoke strategy based on their objectives and aspirations.



ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director



Misinformation and disinformation always have been part of life. However the current (and future) tools can provide increasing possibilities for misuse. Brands can lead the fight against these unfortunate trends: being open and transparent about the usage of different AI tools, resisting the temptation to distort reality with AI tools - these are all important steps in combatting misinformation and disinformation. At the same time brands could start awareness raising programs for consumers to educate them about critical thinking in an era when everything seems realistic and possible.



JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO



Reputation management will extend to optimizing content for LLMs. By understanding and reporting on how clients are appearing, proactive steps can be taken to be visible in reputable channels.

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TEA LINDROOS
Communications & PR
Advisor



It will become increasingly harder to trust what one sees, reads or hears. Versatile media literacy will be worth of gold and that is where we have an important role consulting, advising and supporting our clients.



PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner



Disinformation will remain one of the defining challenges for PR. The answer is not more content, but more credibility. We believe that trust grows when facts are verifiable and knowledge is shared independently.

That is why we are proud to support Wikipedia with a national awareness campaign in its 2026 anniversary year – a symbol of how open, collective information builds societal trust.



JESSICA PHELAN
President & COO



The rise of deepfakes and synthetic voices will test every communicator's and every brand's credibility. But this is exactly where PR proves its value – in protecting and preserving trust.

We must help clients safeguard their reputations by focusing on speed, accuracy, and transparency – verifying facts before the LLMs can amplify inaccuracies, marking owned content with verifiable sources, and training spokespeople to stay visible and human.

The solution isn't fear; it's preparation, integrity, and a relentless focus on what's real.

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Dealing with misinformation and disinformation and its impact on business and personal brands will be one of the biggest challenges in 2026 as AI gathers pace unabated. The World Economic Forum has ranked the challenge as the top short-term global risk in 2024 and 2025, and it would be no surprise if it maintains this position in 2026.

In the UK, the regulator Ofcom has reported that 43% of UK adults say they saw at least one deepfake in a six month period, and four in ten adults encountered misinformation or deepfakes in a four-week period.

Synthetic voices, faces and articles can be spun up quickly, seeded across social platforms and private messaging, and then amplified by engagement-hungry algorithms. For corporates, this creates twin exposures: direct fraud against staff and customers, and indirect reputational or market risk when misleading claims move sentiment before truth catches up. There are countless examples of businesses and industry figures becoming victims of the AI revolution.

National security authorities are warning of escalation. The UK's National Cyber Security Centre cautions that generative AI lowers the cost and skill needed for social-engineering and impersonation, making routine verification harder across government and business.



Deep fakes, AI-generated content and continued spread of misinformation will make it all the more important to use ever possible strategy to increase awareness, understanding and belief.

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CYRILLE
ARCAMONE
Founding Partner



Through the consistent defense of ethical standards, the training of junior staff, and the clarification of rules governing paid content



CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



Brands will have to deploy more and more resources to monitor their exposure. They will also have to take into account the way they are referenced (SEO & GEO). And above all, pay particular attention to how they are treated by AI (which wording and sentiment are used to describe them).



JOHANNES
MARTSCHIN
CEO



New Challenges: Generative AI has literally industrialized misinformation. Deepfakes and low-cost fake news blur lines of evidence, while actors use AI to literally flood the digital space with alternative narratives. In the DACH region, over half of agency marketers cite misinformation as their biggest threat for 2026. The problem: false narratives can gain traction in minutes and massively threaten organizational credibility.

Solutions: Three lines of defense have proven effective: First, real-time monitoring to detect false narratives before they spread. Second, rapid-response protocols with factual corrections. Third, proactive transparency that builds credibility before crises even emerge. Ethics becomes reputation: those who communicate transparently about AI use and data practices gain a real advantage. Teams need robust monitoring systems to separate high-risk signals from normal noise and identify potential reputation risks early.

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ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



The continued evolution of AI-generated content, particular in video form, that spoofs "real" news sites or reporters, leaders/influencers and other voices that carry impact with audiences will be a big challenge in 2026 and beyond. It's already here and with that is an increasing need to put authenticity protocols in place, such as digital watermarking.



KAYLEIGH HANLIN
Account Service
Lead



AI will bring a host of new challenges in PR. From AI-generated falsehoods, such as deepfakes and synthetic voices, that could blur the line between reality and fiction to social platforms that might tighten control over algorithmic transparency, making it harder to track false narratives. Brands can respond to these challenges through proactively monitoring misinformation through AI listening tools, partnering with verified outlets to reinforce truth-based narrative and train team members to identify disinformation patterns.



REGINA BRUSCHKE
Partner



With AI making it easier to generate convincing fake content, misinformation will spread quicker, appear more credible and target smaller communities or niche interest groups. The challenge for PR and brands is no longer just correcting false claims but staying ahead of them. That means: Building direct, trusted channels. Monitoring weak signals early through social listening and community dialogue. Responding with transparency, evidence and real people, not polished corporate statements. And investing in media literacy internally and externally.

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TAESUNG KIM
President



While advances in AI have led to an increase in misinformation, technological advancements have also made it easier to track the sources of misinformation, and the penalties for such misinformation are steadily increasing. The proliferation of various personal social media platforms has also led to an increase in the importance of traditional, legacy media. PR firms need to utilize these platforms in a balanced way.



STEFAN POLLACK
President



2026 will mark the tipping point where misinformation becomes a constant condition, not a crisis. Deepfakes, fabricated press releases, and manipulated visuals will make skepticism a reflex. For communicators, the question shifts from “What if misinformation hits us?” to “How fast can we respond when it does?”

PR must become a discipline of verification. Brands will build “truth supply chains,” systems that authenticate content, track source integrity, and deploy factual counter-narratives in real time. The pre-bunking movement, which educates audiences before falsehoods circulate, will gain momentum.

The most successful organizations will integrate their communications, legal, and data teams into “rapid reality units” capable of rehearsing and executing these responses in minutes. In the age of AI, the most valuable brand asset isn’t reputation, it’s proof.

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SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



Because of the easy and cheap access to AI tools and because of the 'leadership' we are facing in many if not all our countries misinformation and disinformation will continue to grow. PR will have to deal with these excesses by continuously, structurally and at a large scale distributing the correct messages. In its original intent 'old school PR' will actually become more important than before.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



As AI content development and AI bots continue to trick audiences, the need for authenticity and real content and people will rise. Brands need to be more transparent and open about their communications to reassure key audiences/consumers that they are dealing with a real entity and not something posing as real.



MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



One of the biggest threats will not only be misinformation, but misinformation amplified by AI, capable of imitating voices and images in a highly convincing way. Deepfakes, synthetic influencers, and fake corporate statements will become commonplace, and brands will need to combat this by proving the authenticity of their communications. Trust will continue to be the most valuable currency, and brands that can demonstrate transparency through verifiable data will be in the lead.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPING AND KEEPING IT IN A FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPE

The old thought leadership playbook is obsolete. By 2026, establishing authority won't be about publishing volume or securing placements in prestigious outlets—it will be about earning attention through precision, proof, and consistency across fragmented micro-media channels.

Our partners describe a landscape where credibility flows through specialized newsletters, independent podcasts, niche communities, and algorithmic feeds rather than traditional publications. Where audiences value authentic expertise over polished authority. Where leaders must ground insights in proprietary data and original frameworks, not just compelling opinions.

The shift is fundamental: from broadcasting broadly to connecting precisely, from claiming expertise to demonstrating it, from single spokespeople to orchestrated networks of authentic voices. And as AI systems increasingly curate content, optimization for generative engines (GEO) becomes as critical as traditional SEO—making earned media through credible sources more valuable even as media fragments.

What follows are frameworks from partners navigating this transformation: how to develop thought leadership when traditional metrics fail, how to maintain consistency across dispersed channels, and how to prove authority when audiences question everything.

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ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



Thought leadership has to evolve beyond the basics of writing op-eds or blog posts. It's going to require active participation and commentary in other people's work to ensure a brand's message is being delivered the right way.



CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



It is important to differentiate traditional medias from AI-generated medias. This requires increased monitoring of brand exposure. Working one-to-one with key journalists in traditional medias must remain an essential part of their strategy. But they must also monitor AI-generated medias which covers their brand and act accordingly.



SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



Companies and organizations must realize that communicating in a transparent way, in line with objective and journalistic values, as well as acting in accordance with their messages and vision is becoming more important than ever.

They must make sure to develop a strong vision and rationale, and make sure to continuously, structurally and at a large scale convey their vision among all of their internal and external target groups. Given the huge risks of fake news, one or more well-trained spokespeople are indispensable, as well as a thorough, detailed crisis communication plan.

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ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



Quality over volume will continue to be a priority, with real insights or data leading the way. One strong idea adapted for various channels - social, podcasts, newsletters, trade outlets - with opinions backed with proof is one approach that will enhance relevance and build affinity.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



With misinformation growing, thought leadership has an opportunity to grow dramatically in 2026. Not just brands and companies but individuals can lead the charge by focusing their communications not on their brand but on thought leadership around a trend or topic related to their brand. Individual authenticity will win out over simply making noise.



MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



The press will always be important and one of the most relevant means of generating credibility for the brands, but with the fragmentation of this landscape and increasing competition for limited space, other communication channels will continue to evolve to provide visibility to top leaders. Strong participation on LinkedIn, building authority within the community, as well as participating in podcasts and events will be good paths to follow. High-level executives can be great influencers, sharing insights based on authentic reflections instead of generic corporate messages.

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REGINA BRUSCHKE

Partner



Thought Leadership will shift from visibility to credibility. It is no longer about speaking the loudest, but about being the most trusted. Original thinking, backed by data and lived experience, is key. Consistency across channels and, of course, a human presence will become more important.



STEFAN POLLACK

President



Thought leadership in 2026 will no longer be about publishing more; it will be about earning attention through precision and proof. The traditional media ecosystem is splintered beyond recognition, and credibility now lives across micro-audiences, niche communities, and algorithmic filters.

To stand out, brands and leaders must behave more like editors-in-chief than spokespeople. That means owning a consistent point of view, publishing with cadence, and grounding every insight in evidence. It also means developing proprietary IP, data, reports, and frameworks that give journalists, analysts, and audiences something tangible to trust.

At the same time, the best thought leaders will harness internal voices. Employees, engineers, founders, all channels. The challenge for PR is to train, equip, and guide those voices without diluting authenticity. The message must be unified, but the messengers must sound human.

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JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO

true
DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

As revenue for traditional media continues to decline, so arises the need for individual thought leadership and expertise. The most successful thought leaders will understand deeply their audience and use the channels that are most impactful.



TEA LINDROOS
Communications & PR
Advisor

MEDITA

While media landscape continues to fragment, how to stand out from the noise and make your voice heard will continue to be the key question. Authenticity is a strength that builds trust which is the fuel for any relationship. The future holds for us all both new challenges and big promises!



ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director

**PR
BK**
COMMUNICATIONS

The importance of thought leadership in the era of AI is more important than ever before. Since AI models prefer authentic, credible sources when collecting information and giving answers to user request/questions, established thought leaders could be more visible than their competitors.

Current AI models also prefer traditional media, so the job of media relations is going to have an increasing role in thought leadership campaigns. AI models search answers a bit differently, so the traditional SEO-oriented content creation should be replaced by the so called GEO-oriented content production. But one thing does not change: thought leadership position will be achieved via credible and reliable content - be it an interview, op-ed piece or blog post.

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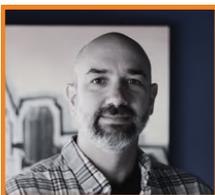


JOHANNES
MARTSCHIN
CEO



The shift is from authority to authenticity. Modern B2B audiences increasingly value authentic perspectives that show genuine understanding of their challenges – even when these come from unexpected voices. The micro-media revolution is changing everything: instead of a few major media outlets, specialized newsletters, independent podcasts, and niche creators with deeply engaged audiences are emerging. Building relationships with hundreds of micro-influencers requires a completely different approach than working with a handful of major outlets.

Content Saturation vs. Relevance: While thought leadership influences 99% of B2B purchasing decisions, 41% of decision-makers find current thought leadership unoriginal, while 38% miss the relevance. What works: Consistency – a regular publishing schedule, genuine responses to comments, and willingness to show how one's thinking evolves. A value-first approach places audience needs above self-promotion. At the same time, usage is shifting to "dark social" – messaging services, private groups, and forums. Those who can navigate these private communities recognize reputation risks much earlier.



TONY FANIZZI
Content Marketing
Lead



Thought leadership in the form of personal videos and podcasts will continue to deliver authentic information to viewers and listeners. There's a healthy skepticism when people are searching to learn more about topics. Information that comes straight from the source is always better received.

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PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner



In a fragmented media world, thought leadership means consistency over volume.

We understand that authority is built through continuity, not noise. The key is to stay true to a few clear narratives – trust, change and responsibility – and to communicate them across all channels with conviction and transparency.



KAYLEIGH HANLIN
Account Service
Lead



Traditional outlets are changing and authority is now distributed across micro-audiences, not just legacy publications. Because of this, we need to help build a brand's integrated thought leadership ecosystem by coordinating a mix of platforms, content types, and voices that work together to position a brand as a trusted authority. Instead of relying on one medium, orchestrate multiple touch points so the brand's expertise shows up consistently wherever target audiences spend their time.



MATT KUCHARSKI
President



Thought leadership has never been solely about getting media coverage but a lot of people portrayed it that way. Thought leadership is quite simply having thoughts (big surprise!) and sharing those thoughts with people who matter through whatever channel makes sense. And don't forget the leadership part -- thoughts without the actual demonstrated leadership isn't sustainable.

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JESSICA PHELAN
President & COO



By 2026, the idea of “getting in the right publication” will matter as much as showing up consistently across the right conversations, including how AI search engines summarize your brand.

We have to help clients build credibility from the inside out: producing high-quality, structured content that algorithms understand and audiences trust. That means owned platforms, partner collaborations, and genuine expertise that shines through, no matter how fragmented the landscape becomes.



CYRILLE
ARCAMONE
Founding Partner



There is an imperative for companies and institutions to embody their positions, which requires a genuine willingness to engage in public debate. This also calls for a clear and legitimate definition of the (necessarily limited) number of topics and arenas where leaders should express themselves—beyond the mere promotion of their business, products, or services.



IN-PERSON EVENTS

WHY TO GO AND CHANGES TO MAKE EVENTS SUCCESSFUL

In-person events are experiencing a renaissance, but the rules have changed. After years of virtual alternatives, audiences now demand that physical gatherings justify the time, expense, and effort required to attend by delivering something digital experiences categorically cannot: *authentic human connection*.

Our partners observe a fundamental shift in purpose. Events in 2026 aren't about efficiently transmitting information—digital platforms handle that better. They're about creating the warmth, spontaneity, and trust that only face-to-face interaction provides.

The bar has risen dramatically: companies must architect experiences that add genuine value, not simply replicate pre-pandemic formats.

Yet this evolution creates strategic opportunity. In an era of AI-generated content and digital skepticism, in-person events offer something increasingly rare: verifiable human presence.

And when enhanced by smart technology integration—personalized matching, customized agendas, AI-assisted planning—events become powerful platforms for building trust and relationships that digital channels struggle to create.

What follows are frameworks for leveraging events strategically: how to design experiences that justify their cost, how to balance technology with human connection, and why in-person gatherings remain critical even as virtual options proliferate.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

IN-PERSON EVENTS



CYRILLE
ARCAMONE
Founding Partner



More in-person meetings are indeed needed to onboard teams, and key stakeholders, and share the vision,. and allow for facilitated in-depth exchanges.



MATT KUCHARSKI
President



I've been to a few in-person events recently and it seems that there's a bit of "upping the game" -- making sure the event is truly remarkable and memorable. Better venues, better speakers, better entertainment and better food. It stands to reason - if we're asking people to get together, we have to make it worth it.



MARIANA MIRRHA
Partner



As people seek genuine human connection and a break from screens, in-person events have made a powerful comeback, and this is a trend that will continue into the coming year.

After the pandemic, many rediscovered the unique value of face-to-face gatherings as spaces for building meaningful relationships. However, in an era when high-quality content is easily accessible online as well, physical events must now go beyond connection. They need to deliver truly distinctive and valuable insights that justify an executive's time and presence.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



After years of hybrid fatigue, 2026 will usher in the rebirth of real connection. In-person events won't just return; they'll transform. Companies are realizing that physical presence delivers what digital never can: shared energy, serendipity, and the kind of memory that algorithms can't replicate.

The most successful events will blend intimacy and impact. We'll see fewer mega-conferences and more curated, high-intent gatherings focused on collaboration and creation. Every event will be both a moment and a content engine, recorded, repurposed, and extended across channels. The playbook will shift from "showcase" to "story capture." Every handshake becomes a clip, every keynote a podcast, every Q&A a blog series. And just as importantly, event safety and authenticity will take center stage. Expect verification policies, deepfake disclaimers, and "trust signage" to become as standard as Wi-Fi passwords.

Because in a world where almost anything can be simulated, a real connection has never been more valuable, or more strategic.



In person events can bring the need to fill on important aspects such as authenticity, interactivity, warmth, human touch.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

IN-PERSON EVENTS



JACKIE LIU
Senior Vice
President



It's painfully obvious many in-person events are overpriced and offer little to no ROI for the attendees or sponsors. They should start there.



ROGER HURNI
Managing Partner



Companies are still trying to figure out what the workplace environment should be. It's confusing at best and is a moving target for employees. The benefit of in person events in 2026 is that it gives companies a reason for in person connection and collaboration.



CHRIS BALDWIN
Chief Visionary Officer
& Founder



I believe the value of people meeting, sharing and connecting will go up dramatically as we see through AI driven content and discussion. Brands that give audiences a forum for real, face-to-face, in-person connection will win.

With COVID behind us and technology making it easy to make decisions without ever talking to someone, we need to make the most of in-person events like trade shows, conferences and meetings. In fact, I believe giving people a change to meet and connect and then allowing them to share about it will be a big win for the brands that make this easy to do.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



JESSICA
GREATHOUSE
COO



Smart companies will continue to prioritize human connection in an increasingly remote digital world. Event planners will need to create exclusive experiences or content to drive in-person attendance.



JOHANNES
MARTSCHIN
CEO



In-person remains king – 95.4% of events remain personal in some form. The corporate event industry in 2026 in the DACH region will be characterized by innovation, personalization, and sustainability. Traditional keynotes give way to interactive sessions: workshops, live demonstrations, and hands-on activities foster deeper connections and ensure knowledge retention. AI-driven personalization maximizes attendee engagement through customized agendas, intelligent matching systems, and personalized content recommendations.

Success Factors: Sustainability is no longer a nice-to-have – eco-friendly initiatives, digital materials, and carbon offsetting are simply expected. Hybrid formats become standard, though with the challenge of meaningfully integrating both worlds rather than simply running them in parallel. The focus shifts from one-time transactions to long-term community building. The integration of immersive technologies like VR/AR and interactive video walls creates unique experiences that simply cannot be replicated digitally. Event planners must creatively manage rising costs and demonstrate measurable ROI.

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CAROLINE PRINCE
Managing Director



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They must add value to their events. Not just deliver promotional or marketing content. Organizations must deliver expert and authentic content. They have to remember that what they say today will be recorded and shared. Their honesty will be challenged over time.



ANDRAS R NAGY
Managing Director



PRBK
COMMUNICATIONS

Integration of AI is going to play a crucial role in the organization of in-person events too. AI will help in setting up a more cost-effective model for organization services through the automation of simple elements (e.g. in-advance registration, reporting etc.). At the same time AI based tools will open up the possibilities for creating unforgettable experiences for event visitors (e.g. immersive exhibitions).



ELIZABETH BLACK
Partner



K HARVEY
BRAND PARTNERS

In-person events are back as long as they are purposeful, smaller in format and allow for high-intent gatherings that prioritize learning, networking or product discovery over spectacle.

Spectacle can be still be useful for grabbing attention, but events that feel personal and purposeful may be more successful, particularly if they create experiences that people can't replicate online.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



SERGE BECKERS
Managing Partner



The more people realize the risks of (online) fake news of and the increase in AI-generated content, the more they should rely on in-person events and meetings, in my opinion. I hope we see an increase in events in which personal contact does not involve video conferencing tools.



PATRICK MILO
Managing Director,
Partner



In-person events will regain their role as spaces for genuine connection. The future of such gatherings lies in creating meaningful, human experiences that extend beyond the event itself. We believe success will come from blending personal interaction with digital depth – turning participation into engagement and presence into trust.



REGINA BRUSCHKE
Partner



After years of digital efficiency, companies are returning to physical events not for scale, but for depth. Building relationships and shared experiences that screens can't deliver.

Trust is earned face-to-face. Key markers for events are therefore: Quality over quantity and real dialogue, not stage shows. It's not about filling rooms, but "filling" relationships.

2026: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS



THE NEW FUNDAMENTALS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

As we look toward 2026, the predictions from our global network of partners reveal not chaos, but clarity. While the tools and technologies transforming our industry are unprecedented, the fundamental principles emerging are surprisingly coherent. The future of public relations will be defined by how well we master these intersecting imperatives:

- Truth at Machine Speed
- AI as a Strategic Partner, Not Replacement
- Trust Through Transparency, Not Just Messaging
- Precision Over Volume in Fragmented Markets
- Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) as Core Competency
- The Authenticity Premium in Content

These six themes aren't isolated trends—they're interconnected imperatives that together define a new operating model for public relations. Organizations that master AI while maintaining authenticity, that move at machine speed while preserving truth, and that achieve precision at scale will not just survive the transformation of 2026—they'll lead it.

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With 115 offices in 39 countries across six continents, Worldcom enables partners to better serve clients by tapping into the expertise and insights of partners who specialize in a variety of local markets and key industries.

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