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Public Relations Group

2027

PREDICTIONS

Marketing and Public Relations in
an AI-Shaped World



THE REPUTATION MIRROR
ONE REPUTATION. TWO AUDIENCES.



What's Coming in 2027

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer an emerging experiment on the edge of public relations; it is the center of the conversation. The force that has been actively remaking how organizations are discovered, interpreted, and sustained will continue to grow its dominance in the center.

For Worldcom PR Group and our global network of independent partners, navigating this shift is not an abstract exercise. PR and Communications agencies are walking lockstep with clients through an unprecedented communications frontier. There not only has been a shift to a landscape where algorithmic systems decide visibility, but the speed and quality of AI has pointed to the need for human judgment to determine value.

The journey ahead centers on three critical inflection points - ***Discovery, Counsel and Reputation***. Customers will travel through all of these points and brands need to understand and respond to those inputs. We have created three articles in this eBook that outline those topics and what brands need to do to stay in the game.

Discovery

Can AI find and choose you? The traditional search and media landscape has shifted toward generative engines and conversational AI. If algorithmic gatekeepers fail to surface your brand, you simply do not exist in the decision journey.

Securing visibility now demands more than standard optimization; it requires machine-readable authority and relevant, high-fidelity narrative footprint. We explore this topic in our article ***The New Discoverability Economy: When AI Answers Instead of Search Engines***.



What's Coming in 2027

Counsel

Who has the expertise to make that strategy meaningful in real markets? Algorithms synthesize information, but they do not grasp nuance, cultural context, or human sentiment.

Turning AI-driven insights into actionable strategy requires seasoned local expertise. In the article ***The Independent Agency Advantage***, Worldcom PR Group partners reflect on how strength lies in pairing predictive intelligence with strategic, boots-on-the-ground counsel that resonates across diverse international markets.

Reputation

What happens when AI gets your organization wrong? Communications teams used to worry that some incorrect information might be printed or posted online. Now, hallucinations, skewed models, and automated misinformation pose immediate risks to corporate equity.

In the article ***Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans***, we explore how protecting a brand and corporate reputation today means actively correcting algorithmic error, defending truth at the speed of AI, and preserving hard-won trust before distortion takes root.

This predictions eBook, alongside our three companion articles, maps this shared path. Together, they offer a framework to help leaders harness AI's discovery power, ground strategy in proven counsel, and safeguard reputation across a transformed communications ecosystem.

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The New Discoverability Economy





The New Discoverability Economy

It isn't a prediction to say that it isn't enough to just be a great brand in the current landscape. For years, companies needed to create effective strategies to have their brands found. In 2027, brands will need to align the need to create an authentic voice with the task of building authority for AI systems to increase visibility.

Companies optimized websites, pursued search rankings, earned media coverage and built social visibility. All of these were built with the expectation that these discovery channels would eventually lead someone back to a website for a sale or a brand experience.

AI is changing that sequence.

Now, the answer itself is becoming the destination. According to a study done by website provider Wix, websites had 25 billion AI search visits in Q1 2026.

The shift is happening because customers ask ChatGPT for a recommendation. A buyer asks Gemini or Claude to compare vendors. An executive uses an AI assistant to research a potential partner.

Instead of doing primary research from links in Traditional SEO, users get a synthesized response without requiring the user to click through to the original sources. It also doesn't provide the traditional 10 links, but it can provide citations that range from 3.7 in ChatGPT to 7.3 in Google AI Overviews.

That means a brand might name, accurately characterized and recommended—or it may never enter consideration.



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Caroline Prince of Yucatan captures the implications in a single sentence: “In a generated answer, there is no page two.”

With the loss of opportunity, it could fundamentally change what organizations mean by “discoverability.” Thought leaders in the AI response space already understand the objective will no longer be only to get rankings. The new discoverability economy will demand that a brand be understandable, credible and authoritative enough to become part of the answer.

Shifting from search of search to share of answer

Traditional search opened a door. Generative AI can close the exploration loop. Roger Hurni of Off Madison Ave describes the behavioral shift as “cognitive surrender.” There is often a behavior that people often accept an AI-generated response and continue with the decision. AI had eliminated the need for users to open ten links and conduct research on their own.

“Search results started a process,” Hurni says. “An AI answer ends one. The answer becomes the decision.”

Along with this shift, a very different competitive environment has emerged. When a brand ranks fourth rather than second in traditional search, it still has an opportunity to collect about 3-4% of clicks.

“Search rankings and traffic still matter, but organisations increasingly need to understand whether they appear in relevant AI-generated answers, how they are described and which sources shape those responses,” Stephanie Phillips of Phillips Group explained.



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When an AI overview is shown on Google, that CTR drops to 0.8%. When an AI engine provides three recommendations and the brand isn't among them, that is no fallback clicks in AI tools like Gemini, Claude and ChatGPT.

This is why Tina Charpentier of Padilla predicts that the next communications battleground will move “from attention to narrative ownership.” She expects “share of answer” to become an important complement to share of voice: not simply how frequently an organization appears in conversation, but whether AI systems include it when interpreting a category, explaining an issue or recommending a solution.

Elizabeth Marshall Black of K Harvey Brand Partners sees the same change coming to measurement. As more research takes place without a website visit, communications teams will need to understand the value of visibility that doesn't produce a click.

“People are getting their answers straight from ChatGPT, Gemini and Google's AI Overviews without ever clicking a link, and those tools lean heavily on what credible journalists and outlets have written,” Black said. I expect smart brands to start shifting budget from traditional SEO toward PR, and share of answer to become a metric we report right alongside share of voice.”

That poses an uncomfortable question for conventional digital measurement. If an AI engine recommends your company but the user never visits your website, did your communications work? Increasingly, the answer may be yes.



Brands need to become machine-legible

The new discoverability economy is not simply SEO with a different acronym.

AI systems need to establish what an organization is, what it does and whether the available evidence supports those conclusions. That means the quality and consistency of the information surrounding a brand matter in new ways.

Daniel Chou of The Pollack Group puts it this way: “Every brand has a story it tells, and a set of facts machines can check. In 2027, the second will increasingly decide whether anyone hears the first.”

Consider the challenge from the model’s perspective. A company’s website describes its services one way. An outdated business directory describes them another way. Executive biographies conflict. Office locations are inconsistent. Old press coverage contains information that is no longer current.

A human researcher may notice the discrepancies and resolve them. An AI system has to synthesize them. As Chou notes, it may simply guess—or favor another organization whose information is easier to reconcile.

This elevates work that once looked like digital housekeeping into a strategic communications priority. Clear entity information, consistent descriptions, structured facts, current leadership information and pages that explain expertise in precise language all help AI systems understand what an organization represents.



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Kayleigh Hanlin of True Digital Communications argues that this requires a more holistic view of visibility. Website content, PR, brand information, third-party mentions and reputation are no longer separate disciplines when all of them can influence the same AI-generated answer.

“Understanding the buying cycle, the audience, their pain points and the reality of the market create context that is hard to automate,” said Hanlin.

“That knowledge comes from living in the industry every day, seeing the same challenges across clients and understanding what actually matters to the customer.”

In other words, the brand narrative and the brand’s factual infrastructure need to agree.

Earned Media Earns Its Keep

PR has traditionally valued media coverage partly because it places a brand in front of an audience through a credible third party. Those earned media references are now contributing to coverage from a second audience: the AI systems synthesizing information for users.

It isn’t just a change happening in one market. Those shifts are visible and important globally. Johannes Martschin of Martschin & Partner sees the that shift developing in Austria and across the German-speaking market.

By 2027, he expects generative engine optimization (GEO) to become a regular communications investment, but one built less around conventional keywords and more around “structured, clearly verifiable facts, reliable sources, and earned media that AI systems classify as trustworthy.”



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Although Organic Search focuses on what company publishes on its own channels, independent corroboration gives that claim greater weight in AI. Credible journalism, expert commentary, industry sources, professional organizations and other third parties are part of the ecosystem used by AI systems to draw conclusions.

With this dependency, public relations becomes part of a broader verification infrastructure. The job is no longer only to get the organization mentioned. It is to build an authoritative record of what the organization knows, does and stands for.

Local visibility becomes part of global visibility

The challenge becomes more complicated for international organizations. AI discovery is not necessarily a single global contest. Different languages and markets have their own media ecosystems, institutions, sources of authority and cultural context.

Imma Folch of [LF Channel](#) argues that international companies cannot assume visibility in English will automatically translate into visibility elsewhere. AI answers generated in a local language can depend heavily on the information environment available in that market.

“In 2027, the agency model that wins will not be the biggest, but the one that knows where it is standing. As large networks consolidate and cut, brands are discovering that scale often means distance: rotating teams, layered approvals and strategies designed elsewhere and translated locally,” Folch said.



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“Spain shows why this matters. It is not one market but several, with four official languages, strong regional media ecosystems in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia or Valencia, and 17 autonomous communities with their own institutions and business networks.”

Just the language dynamic changes the role of local communications. A global company may have extensive English-language coverage and still be weakly represented when someone asks a question in Spanish, German or another language. Trusted national and regional media, professional organizations, local experts and locally relevant owned information all contribute to how the organization is understood.

For Martschin, this has particular importance in the DACH region, where local institutions, associations and other credibility signals can carry significant weight. Generative discovery may be global technology, but authority remains highly contextual.

Optimize for the questions people actually ask

There is another reason communications teams cannot treat this purely as a technical exercise: AI changes the language of discovery.

People do not naturally think in keywords. According to a [Semrush study](#), the average prompt length for search-enabled queries nearly doubled from 4.7 words to 8.7 words in one year.

Hurni offers a useful example. A traveler may not type “accessible resort.” They may ask: “Where should I take my parents for their 50th anniversary if my dad uses a walker?”



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In addition to the number of words, that query contains intent, emotion, circumstances and practical constraints.

The organizations most likely to surface in that answer will need content and third-party evidence that address the underlying human problem, and not simply content optimized around a high-volume search phrase.

AI search won't just be important for casual searches. It will be very consequential in categories involving complex decisions. Andras Nagy of PRBK Communications expects AI visibility to become particularly important distinct industries.

“AI could significantly help the purchaser (an average consumer, a CEO or a procurement manager) in saving time and ultimately money,” Andras said. “I firmly believe that in the following sectors AI visibility will be outstandingly important in 2027: travel, tourism & hospitality; B2B IT, tech and professional services; finance, insurance, fintech.”

This growth will be in areas where buyers must synthesize significant information before making a decision. The more complicated the decision, the more valuable an AI assistant can become. And the more important it becomes for organizations to understand the questions their audiences are really trying to answer.

Don't optimize the human out of communications

For all the attention GEO and AI visibility will receive in 2027, brands should resist a predictable mistake: creating communications for machines at the expense of the people they ultimately need to persuade.



The New Discoverability Economy

The way you amplify the brand and your authenticity is with PR, with affiliates, with partners, Leigh McKensie (Semrush) said during his panel discussion with Worldcom PR Group in Cannes. “The way we like to look at it is first talk with your customers, look at the data and pick the models that are relevant to your audience.”

In 2027, communications team will need to understand how to put two divergent audiences in the drivers’ seat. Jake Neerland of Padilla argues that organizations need to find the middle ground. Ignore GEO entirely and competitors may outpace you. Lean too heavily into machine optimization and content can lose the usefulness, originality and relevance that made it valuable in the first place.

Serge Beckers of Wisse Kommunikatie makes a similar point. AI engines are not the customer. People are.

“Machines, platforms, and AI engines are not your customers or buyers; they are merely channels to reach them,” Beckers said. “It is still people who purchase your products and services, it is still people who decide whether they find you credible and trustworthy.”

As generative optimization matures, Beckers expects the emphasis to move from producing large volumes of GEO content to producing better content: original perspectives, informed opinions, creativity and strong journalistic thinking.

That may prove to be one of the more counterintuitive outcomes of AI-driven discovery. When machines can manufacture generic information at enormous scale, distinct human expertise becomes a stronger authority 13 signal.

It also means that companies need to be open to moving into topics that might not have traditionally been top priorities.

“When it comes to algorithmic authority, [brands] will need to be more open to conversations that are less conventional and more respectful,” Luis Felipe Sánchez Lam from Estrategia Relaciones Públicas points out. “Above all, more authentic every day than what conventional chatbots have accustomed us to so far.”

The organizations that become the answer

Stefan Pollack of The Pollack Group believes the question brands ask will change accordingly: from “Do we rank?” to “Are we the answer?”

“Looking ahead, earned media, thought leadership, and owned content will converge into a single, integrated system,” explains Pollack. “Earned media shapes what others believe about your brand, while owned content provides the proof points that underpin credibility.”

Answering that question requires much more than technical optimization. Organizations need to be understandable: AI systems should be able to determine who they are and what they do.

They need to be verifiable: credible external sources should support their claims. And they need to be worth recommending: their expertise and differentiation have to answer a real human need.

The discoverability economy of 2027 will not eliminate search, websites, journalism or conventional PR. It will call for them to be connected in a new way.



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Brands will still need to communicate with people. But increasingly, they will also need to consider the systems deciding which information those people see first.

The goal is no longer simply to be found.

It is to become part of the answer.



Partner Insights on AI Search and AI Visibility

- Brand credibility in the AI era: Worldcom & Semrush study
- From FIFA's Stadium Names to Brand Visibility in the AI Era
- Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) and the Future of AI Visibility
- GEO and PR: earned media as the currency of brand visibility
- GEO vs AEO
- H2 2026: Five Bold Bets for the Back Half
- How PR & GEO Can Boost Travel Destination Visibility in AI Search
- How to prioritize GEO in your communications efforts.
- Not Getting Traction On AI? It's Likely A People Problem
- Should your brand invest in paid editorial this quarter?
- Strengthening brand visibility and sales
- Turns Out AI Has Opinions About Your Brand
- What are the sources of AI visibility?
- What Does Reddit Know That Others Don't?



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The Independent Agency Advantage





The Independent Agency Advantage

AI is making agency work faster.

Research that once consumed hours can be accelerated. First drafts arrive in seconds. Monitoring can be automated. Translation, transcription, summarization and routine content production are becoming increasingly efficient.

That creates an obvious question for the communications industry: if technology makes more of the work easier to produce, where does an agency bring value?

As routine execution becomes faster and cheaper, value moves toward judgment, senior counsel, trusted relationships, category experience and genuine knowledge of local markets.

“Answers are cheap,” said Roger Hurni of Off Madison Ave. He argues that “the expensive part is knowing which problems deserve solving. Judgment comes from experience, and experience sits with senior leaders.”

The distinction between speed and expertise will become increasingly important in 2027. After a period marked by consolidation, restructuring and staff reductions across the communications industry, brands are evaluating not only what their agencies produce, but how they produce it. Brands know that AI is in the mix, but they will want to know who is actually doing the thinking. In essence, AI will not eliminate the agency premium. It may relocate it. Those are areas where independent agencies have an opportunity to compete on something other than scale.

AI changes the economics of execution

Much of the communications work that historically required significant human time can now be accelerated with AI. AI can help gather information, draft material and improve production efficiency. It cannot provide the unique insight that makes communications worth paying attention to.

Serge Beckers of Wisse Kommunikatie sees a clear implication for the agency business model. His prediction is stark: “Content creation will become a commodity, consultancy will become the primary revenue model.”

That doesn’t mean content stops mattering. It means producing something is no longer enough to justify a premium. If every agency has access to powerful research, drafting and analytical tools, the competitive advantage cannot simply be possession of those tools. It becomes how they are used.

What should the client say? What should it not say? Which opportunity matters? Which finding is a distraction? When should a company move quickly? When does experience say to wait?

These are judgment calls.

“Leaner agencies are the result of AI integrations,” said Tony Fanizi of True Digital Communications. “whether they use AI as an amplifier or eliminator will separate the authentic specialists from the volume-driven agencies.”

Senior access becomes part of the product

For independent agencies, that creates a structural opportunity. Susie Horgan of Springboard Communications says clients increasingly value the personal model independents can offer.

She predicts “that means direct access to senior, experienced advisers who know our clients’ businesses and stay involved from beginning to end. This is what sets independent agencies apart from others.”

As AI absorbs more routine work, she expects those years of experience to become even more valuable. At an independent agency, there model is not simply about senior people attending a pitch and then handing the work down.

Engaged leadership means it reduces the distance between the client problem and the people with the experience to interpret it.

Smaller, independent organizations can often make that access central to their operating model. Decisions do not necessarily have to travel through the same number of organizational layers. Senior leaders can remain closer to the work, the client and the market.

In an environment where technology makes production easier, that proximity becomes part of the service.



The Independent Agency Advantage

Stefan Pollack of The Pollack Group muses, “after 25+ years in Worldcom, I have seen firsthand that practitioners with deep local relationships can distinguish between a truly global campaign and a global copy-and-paste. The winning model for 2027 is clear: independent agencies equipped with advanced AI tools, senior talent, and trusted local partners. Technology delivers the scale; people deliver the judgment.”

Experience is context accumulated over time

The same principle applies to specialization. Kayleigh Hanlin of True Digital Communications believes independent agencies become particularly valuable when they bring deep expertise in an industry.

Understanding a category means more than learning its terminology. It means knowing the buying cycle, audience expectations, commercial pressures, common objections and recurring problems. It means recognizing patterns because you have seen variations of them before.

AI can process an enormous amount of information. But Hanlin argues it doesn’t replace “years of context, pattern recognition and industry knowledge.”

This suggests a different agency model for the AI era. Instead of selling access to production capacity, the most valuable agencies may increasingly sell deep knowledge of a specific industry sector.

As global execution gets easier, local knowledge gets more valuable. AI makes it easier to distribute communications internationally. It can translate copy, summarize market research, adapt content and produce variations for different channels almost instantly.

But translation is not the same as localization.

Imma Folch of LF Channel points to Spain as an example of why. Spain has four official languages, powerful regional media ecosystems and 17 autonomous communities with distinct institutions, business networks and cultural dynamics. A message that works in Madrid may not land the same way in Barcelona or Bilbao.

“No AI tool and no global template can tell a client which journalist in Barcelona will actually take the call,” Folch says, or understand every circumstance in which cultural nuance could turn a promising campaign into a mistake.

That is where local experience stops looking like an operational detail and starts looking like intellectual property.

Caroline Prince of Yucatan frames the point another way: “AI amplifies what you give it. Feed it noise and you get louder noise. Feed it real on-the-ground knowledge of each market and it becomes a lever for international programs.”

Give the system generic assumptions and it can create generic output faster. Give it deep on-the-ground knowledge and it can amplify something much more valuable.

The technology scales information. It does not manufacture experience of a place.

Relationships remain stubbornly human

There is another part of local communications that resists standardization: relationships.

Johannes Martschin of Martschin & Partner argues “what remains is precisely what corporations find structurally difficult to scale when entire PR brands disappear in a restructuring: local practical knowledge, personal relationships with editorial offices and government agencies, and a deep understanding of how communication actually works.”

Pollack makes a similar distinction. AI can help produce a communications plan. It cannot necessarily determine which journalist in Denver, Düsseldorf or Singapore can genuinely move a narrative. It doesn’t instinctively know why an idea will resonate in one market and fall flat in another.

Those judgments come from repeated interaction with press and editorial contacts. That matters because PR is not purely an information business. At its core, it is a relationship business.

AI may reduce the effort required to identify a journalist. However, it cannot manufacture years of professional trust and experience with that journalist.

As machine capabilities become more pervasive, the assets you cannot scale become more distinctive.

Local depth no longer has to mean limited reach

When evaluating options, brands often face trade-off when choosing agencies.

A large global network offers geographic coverage and operational scale. A local independent agency provides proximity and market knowledge but could appear more limited internationally.

Networks of independent partner agencies offer a different model. Martschin describes his agency's position as locally rooted in the German-speaking market while working internationally through Worldcom PR Group. Folch makes a similar case for combining genuine local depth with a global network.

That combination may be especially relevant in an AI-enabled agency environment.

Shared technology can provide some of the scale that once depended on large centralized organizations. Independent partners can use common tools, exchange knowledge and coordinate international programs while retaining direct ownership of relationships in their own markets.

The result is not a choice between global and local. It is finding pr agencies who are in a partnership with a model designed to combine them.



Transparency will matter more as AI changes the work

If AI can level some of the content generation playing field, agencies will face greater pressure to demonstrate where human value enters the process. They will be transparent about:

- Who is actually working on the account?
- What is automated?
- Where is senior judgment being applied?
- What expertise is the client paying for?

Elizabeth Marshall Black of K Harvey Brand Partners expects the consolidation and restructuring of large agency groups to show why “genuine local knowledge of the media, culture and people in a market becomes the one thing a template can’t replace. That’s exactly where independent networks like Worldcom win.”

That does not mean every independent agency automatically has an advantage. Independence by itself is not expertise. A smaller organization can still over-automate, under-resource or produce undifferentiated work. With automation, there is also another group in the mix that represent growing competition – the independent consultant.

They “claim to have experience and subcontracted teams for a given service,” explains Luis Felipe Sánchez Lam of Estrategia Relaciones Públicas. “But when difficult moments arrive, such as sensitive issues or even ones that escalate into crises, those consultants don’t have teams capable of responding effectively, because they lack what is essential to an agency: its knowledge not only of the local market, but of how that client behaves in that market and how each audience responds to it.”



The Independent Agency Advantage

Technology standardizes the tools, not the judgment

By 2027, capable agencies of every size will have access to powerful AI. That will make the technology itself less differentiating.

The more interesting questions will be human ones. It will be important to have team members who know how to respond to have an intimate knowledge of a client.

“Clients increasingly need people who understand not only what is happening, but why it matters locally,” Stephanie Phillips of Phillips Group. She continues, “how different audiences may respond and where the reputational or stakeholder risks sit.”

If that happens, the independent agency opportunity will not come from trying to replicate the scale of a holding company with fewer people. It will come from competing on something different: access, specialization, judgment and local knowledge.

AI can make communications faster. A direct connection to the best thinking will make companies navigate the shift environment.

The premium will increasingly be knowing what to do when companies need something more than speed.

Partner Insights on The Independent Agency Advantage

- 5 Reasons to Partner with an Independent PR Agency
- GEO and PR: earned media as the currency of brand visibility
- H2 2026: Five Bold Bets for the Back Half
- Stop Following the Blue Line | Roger Hurni | TEDxAsia Pacific U
- Why hiring a PR agency is a cost-effective option
- Why Most Brand Messaging Fails Before the Launch

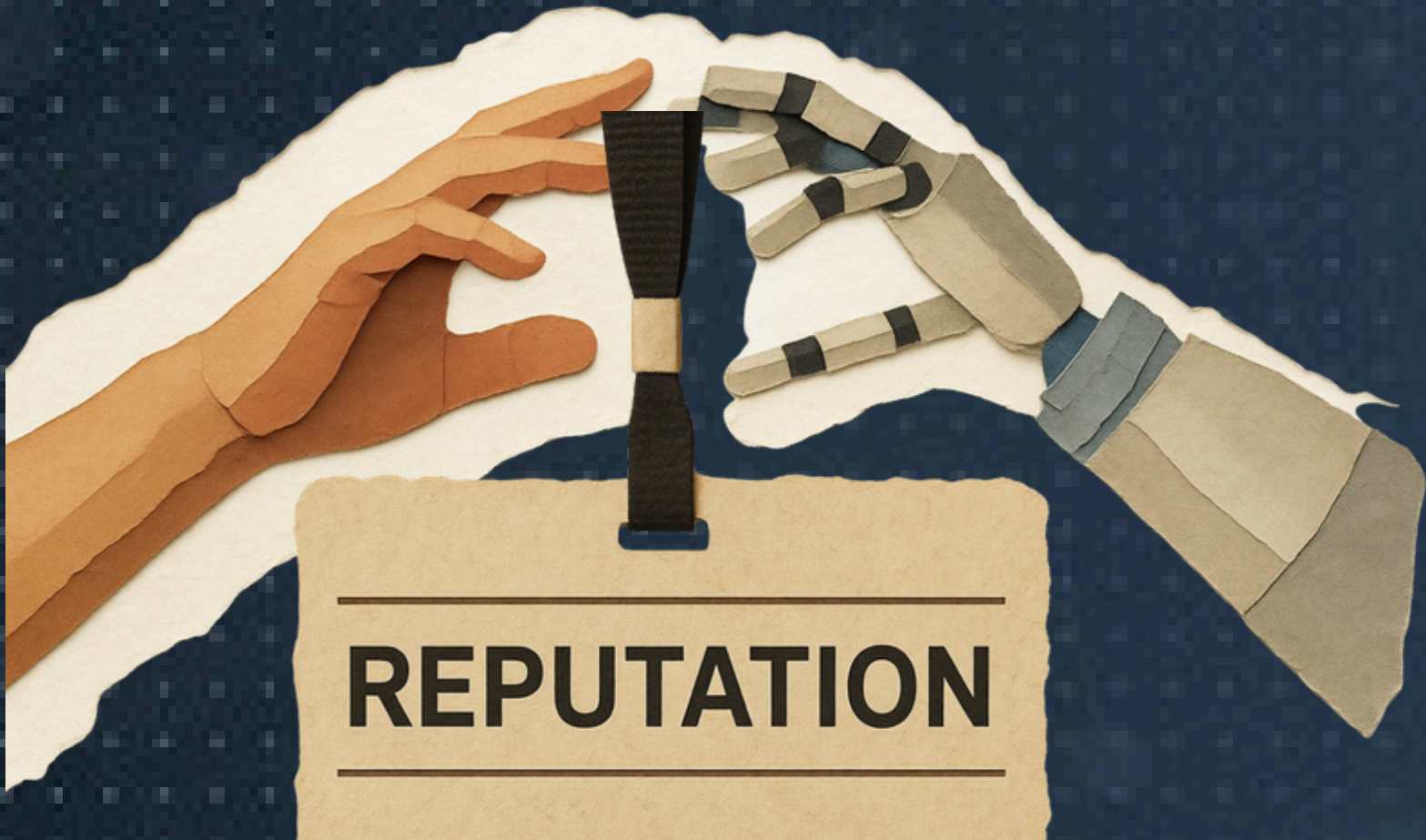


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Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans





Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

Traditionally, reputation management has begun with a familiar question: What do people believe about us? This process helped to identify inaccurate information, track emerging issues and intervene before small problems become bigger ones.

The paradigm has changed so that now it will need to include two other questions.

- 1 – What does AI say about us?
- 2 – What do we train AI to say to our consumers?

Monitoring external AI systems effectively will only be the beginning of the challenge because companies are integrating AI into the consumer experience.

For communications teams, this creates a very practical question: who decides how that agent should speak?

Pelin Ateşkaya of Optimore groups envisions that existing communications strategy will make a dramatic shift. She notes that brands already have made extensive investments message frameworks, spokesperson preparation, Q&As, tone of voice and crisis protocols.

“An AI agent will need the same guidance, but it will be having thousands of different conversations, responding in real time and adapting its answers to individual users,” Ateşkaya explains.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

“This means communication strategies will need to move beyond message architecture and start defining conversation architecture: what the brand can say, what it should not say, which sources it should rely on, when it should escalate to a human and how it should respond when challenged.”

Whether it is training an internal system or monitoring external AI tools, it means there is a central question: What do the machines believe about us?

Tina Charpentier of Padilla believes that question has become important and will take a central position in reputation management.

“AI-generated answers are becoming an increasingly important layer between organizations and their stakeholders,” Charpentier explains. “Those answers can reinforce a reputation — but they can also perpetuate outdated information, amplify misinformation or create an incomplete picture of an organization.”

And unlike traditional search, an AI platform may present that conclusion as a direct answer. In 2026, companies started the process to discover what ChatGPT and other AI systems say about an organization. That monitoring will become as routine part of reputation management as monitoring press coverage.

When an AI answer becomes a belief

In all of the response of AI, accurate information Roger Hurni of Off Madison Ave puts the reputational risk simply: “A wrong AI answer about your brand becomes your customer's belief.”



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

His concern stems from the same behavioral change affecting AI discovery. If an AI assistant incorrectly characterizes a company's product, history, leadership or reputation, the user may never know there was a discrepancy.

Nothing on the page gives it away, but false placeholders are swapped out or non-related sites. That metrics moved from 0.17% results in September to 8.0% in October 2026.

Previously, users experienced a company one point at a time. They could read articles, listen to podcasts, so some online searches to help formulate an answer. Many times, they would only do one of these at a time.

AI is trained to look for the answer to the question that you ask. AI also can synthesize all of these sources to formulate an answer and to paint a portrait based on the perspective provided by the input.

The current state of many AI engines is that they make live searches on tools like Bing and Google for information that does not exist in trained LLM data. The stakes for this issue are even greater with recent research from Nozzle.io pointing to Google poisoning SERPs. This issue is that Google serves complete, normal-looking search engine results pages (SERP) whose results have been swapped out.

The experience and that an AI tool “is directly telling consumers what it thinks is the correct answer about what your company is, how it operates and if it's trustworthy,” Jake Neerland of Padilla explains. “That summary is being treated as truth and that's where we're seeing those reputation problems.”



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

With source issues and SERP poisoning Organizations that ignored search visibility could lose traffic and eventually business to competitors. But the AI environment changes the nature of the output. A company buried on the second page of search results still existed in the results.

The technology is no longer just directing people toward information. It is interpreting the information for them. That makes AI an increasingly important reputation surface.

An AI assistant can instead tell a user what it believes the company is, whether it is trustworthy or which competitor is a better option. If the opinion of AI is that your company is not trustworthy, it can simply not be included in indirect searches.

AI Reputation Audits are Necessity

This year has been filled with companies that are looking to see what AI tools say about them and their brands. That process is one that will become a routine part of business due to the speed and endless sources of information that AI devours into its databases.

Stefan Pollack of The Pollack Group expects a new question to appear regularly on CEO and communications agendas: “What do ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity say about us?”

That means going beyond typing the company name into a chatbot once. Organizations will need to test multiple platforms and multiple questions. They should understand which attributes consistently appear, whether descriptions are current, what sources influence the answers and where persistent gaps or errors exist surrounding an organization.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

With the translation capabilities, companies should be looking across languages and markets as well. Johannes Martschin of Martschin & Partner expects these audits to become as commonplace in Austria, Germany and Switzerland as conventional media roundups.

Elizabeth Marshall Black of K Harvey Brand Partners goes further, predicting that AI reputation reviews will become part of standard agency retainers and that AI misinformation will eventually earn a dedicated place in crisis plans.

Jackie Liu of The Pollack Group offers a useful counterpoint to the idea that this requires communications professionals to reinvent everything they do.

The platforms may be new, she argues, but the work is manageable. Communications teams have always researched sources of influence, monitored reputation and strengthened credible third-party information. ChatGPT, Gemini and other platforms can become another layer of that existing discipline.

Ways to Start Reputation Monitoring

What should that discipline look like? Hurn makes a key point that brand and reputation teams should keep in mind: “You have no control over the AI answer. You do have control over what the AI reads.”

When finding the right prompts to track it is important to ask what a customer wants, not what a communications team will ask. For example, a customer may never ask, “What is Company X's reputation?”



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

Instead, they may ask which company is safest, most reliable, appropriate for a particular need or best suited for a specific situation. Those questions can reveal very different reputational narratives.

Fix the source, not just the symptom

AI answers change as sources change, models change and new information enters the ecosystem. That changes how communications teams think about correction.

When a newspaper publishes an error, a company can contact the publication. When a website contains incorrect information, the organization can often identify the page and pursue a correction.

AI-generated misinformation can be harder to trace. The answer may represent a synthesis of information collected from multiple places. Martschin notes that there is no single editorial office to call. Instead, organizations may have to work backward through the information environment: owned content, structured data, third-party profiles, authoritative databases, scholarly information or other sources AI systems may be interpreting.

Charpentier makes a similar argument. Managing AI reputation will be less about “fixing the chatbot” than ensuring credible, consistent information appears in sources that AI systems trust.

That requires cross-functional thinking.

Kayleigh Hanlin of True Digital Communications argues that AI findings should not live in a separate monitoring report. They should feed back 34 into the overall marketing and communications strategy.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

If AI repeatedly misunderstands a company's services, that may expose a website problem.

If it cannot identify the organization's expertise, that may reveal a content or earned-media gap. It might also be an indicator of a brand evolution that is being muddled by outdated references and content.

If third-party sources tell a different story from the brand's own channels, there may be a broader reputation problem. The AI answer becomes a diagnostic tool.

Earned media becomes part of reputation infrastructure

Liu expects communications professionals to continue identifying the sources that influence public understanding. This also makes earned media increasingly relevant to machine reputation.

The logical proof for the value of earned media is straightforward. AI systems encounter what organizations say about themselves. They can also encounter what journalists, analysts, experts, social channels and other independent sources say about them.

When those sources reinforce one another, the organization's identity and authority become clearer. When they conflict, the model has to reconcile the discrepancy.

That makes reputation less about a collection of individual media placements and more about the cumulative information ecosystem surrounding an organization.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

The goal is not to manufacture a perfectly controlled narrative. That isn't realistic with human audiences and it is even less realistic with AI. The objective is to make accurate information more available, more consistent and better supported.

Complications with Local Context in Machine Reality

International organizations face an additional challenge: AI does not always respect geographic boundaries as neatly as communications teams do. Martschin sees this in the DACH region, where AI systems can combine information from Germany, Austria and international sources despite meaningful differences in regulation, market structure and cultural context. A statement accurate for Germany may not automatically be accurate in Austria.

The risk becomes greater in fields such as healthcare and science, where an incorrect summary involving treatment, regulatory approvals or research can carry substantially higher stakes than an ordinary brand-description error.

Imma Folch of LF Channel argues that this is also where human interpretation becomes essential. AI can flag that something is being said. It cannot always determine whether that information matters in a particular market, why it is gaining attention or whether it represents noise or the beginning of a serious issue.

That requires people who understand local media, institutions, culture and stakeholders.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

As monitoring becomes increasingly automated, the value of communications counsel moves toward interpreting the signal and deciding what action to take.

Crisis Planning Needs a Machine Layer

The coordinating practice with reputation management is crisis preparedness. The same logic should will need to be adopted in crisis preparedness.

Imagine an organization facing a fast-moving issue in 2027. The communications team monitors traditional media and social conversation. But customers, employees, investors and reporters are also asking AI systems what happened. Companies need to understand the parameters they will be facing in a crisis including questions like:

- What are those systems saying?
- Are they repeating outdated facts?
- Are they confusing allegations with confirmed information?
- Are they surfacing an old issue because the available source material is stronger than new reporting?
- Are they drawing information from a different market with a different regulatory framework?

Teams may need pre-established procedures for testing AI platforms, identifying source problems and rapidly publishing clear, authoritative information that helps correct the broader information environment.

That does not give the organization control over an AI system. It gives the AI system better evidence to work with. This shift also proved the prediction from Ateşkaya at the opening of the article.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

As companies adopt the use of AI to manage customers and inquiries, crisis management responses will need to be part of that management strategy.

It's Reputation Management, Not AI Control

There is a temptation whenever a new communications channel emerges to imply it can be “managed” in the same way as an owned website, traditional media or advertising campaign.

AI does not work that way. Models change. Sources change. Answers can differ by prompt, user, product, geography and moment. Organizations should therefore be cautious about promises that GEO or AI reputation management can guarantee a specific answer.

What communications teams can do is much more practical:

- Improve factual consistency.
- Publish useful and authoritative information.
- Build credible third-party validation.
- Monitor recurring inaccuracies.
- Identify the information sources influencing them.

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Measure whether the narrative changes over time.

That is reputation management—not control.

Human and machine reputation are becoming one system

Ultimately, “reputation for humans” and “reputation for machines” may be a temporary distinction.



Reputation Management for Machines as Well as Humans

The two increasingly feed one another. People have experiences with organizations. Those experiences surface as content in reviews, social conversations, media coverage and public information data. AI systems synthesize that record. Their answers then influence what another person believes about the organization.

The cycle begins again.

That is why it matters when Charpentier asks, “What does AI believe about us?”

It is not because machines have opinions in the human sense. It is because their synthesis increasingly shapes human perception. By 2027, the organizations best positioned to protect their reputations will not be those trying to control every AI answer. That is neither realistic nor sustainable.

They will be the organizations that systematically build an information environment in which the accurate answer is the easiest one—for people and machines—to find.



Partner Insights on AI Search and AI Visibility

- Artificial intelligence and communication: how we use it at LF Channel
- AI and Sustainability Reporting: What Companies Need to Know
- Before the crisis
- Five tips for protecting your reputation online
- How PR & GEO Can Boost Travel Destination Visibility in AI Search
- How to prioritize GEO in your communications efforts.
- Improving your online reputation management
- The EU AI Act's transparency rules and editorial responsibility in PR practice
- Why Most Brand Messaging Fails Before the Launch
- Why Your Brand's Words Are Its Most Underrated Asset