

THE CEO VIEW:
THE IMPACT OF
COMMUNICATIONS
ON CORPORATE CHARACTER
IN A 24x7 DIGITAL WORLD

Arthur W. Page

ARTHUR W. PAGE SOCIETY

VISION

The Arthur W. Page Society is committed to the belief that public relations as a function of executive management is central to the success of the corporation. The membership of the Society will embrace those individuals who epitomize the highest standards of public relations practice, as exemplified by the Page Principles.

MISSION

To strengthen the enterprise leadership role of the chief communications officer by embracing the highest professional standards, advancing the way communications is understood, practiced and taught, and providing a collegial and dynamic learning environment.

FOREWORD

In 2007, when the Arthur W. Page Society published its seminal thought leadership monograph, *The Authentic Enterprise*, its conclusions were supported in part by the findings of our first-ever “CEO View” study. Six years later, we have conducted our second such survey.

Although much has changed in business, society and the global economy over this period, it is striking to note the consistency of both strategic belief and underlying values among these leaders of major enterprises. This speaks not only to the foresight of these senior leaders, but to the continuing need for chief communications officers to accelerate the transformation of our functions.

Among the many noteworthy findings in the present study, the importance to CEOs of social media has continued to grow, and is no longer perceived as “emerging.” Social business is now an essential dimension of management. Conversely, the traditional notion of message segmentation has continued its decline. Today, CEOs understand there can be no walled-off communications to particular constituencies. Everyone can see what everyone else is seeing.

Similarly, CEOs continue to see the need for new forms of measurement for ever-greater speed, for greater enterprise transparency and for new skills such as active listening. These findings and many more are contained in this thoughtful and pragmatically useful study.

I would like to highlight two shifts in perspective underlying the survey’s findings. Both are encouraging.

- ***First, we see a shift in emphasis from defense to offense.*** CEOs in 2007 saw the communications function largely as a way to fend off personal attacks and bad publicity. In 2013, they see more opportunity for our function to set agendas and build engagement across all stakeholders.
- ***Second, we see a growing sense of optimism about the authenticity of our firms, our people and our reputations.*** This is, to say the least, contrary to conventional wisdom about business today. But these CEOs believe that, most of the time, the decisions and actions of their people genuinely reflect the organization’s values—and they are looking for increased openness and honesty in the organization’s communications so that the world can see those people and those values. They want greater transparency, not more spin.

Both of these trends, if they continue, are very good news for CCOs who share the Page Society’s point of view, as expressed in *The Authentic Enterprise* and *Building Belief*, our “new model” of communications published last year.

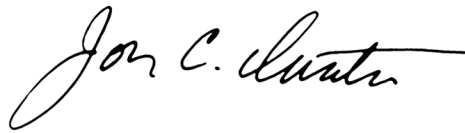
As we reflect on the findings of this latest CEO study, I would urge us to consider them as broadly, as strategically and as hopefully as our leaders

are doing. They are not focusing only on tactics, but more importantly on organizational values, corporate character and enterprise authenticity. They understand that these principles go beyond ethics and compliance to speak about competitive differentiation and the firm's distinct identity.

The digital revolution has empowered every individual to demand authenticity of all enterprises and institutions. As our new model argues, it is no longer possible to manage reputations and brands separately from our workforces and cultures. To be an authentic enterprise, these must be managed as one.

Our bosses understand that, and they are looking to us to lead.

The Page Society thanks Gotham Research Group for its skill and professionalism in conducting this survey. And on behalf of all our members, I wish to express our deep gratitude to the participating CEOs for sharing their time, wisdom and experience. They point us as CCOs to an increasingly ambitious leadership role in our organizations, and a very exciting future for our profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon C. Iwata". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jon C. Iwata, Chairman
Arthur W. Page Society

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, the Arthur W. Page Society reported on a series of interviews with CEOs of Fortune 50 companies. The research became part of *The Authentic Enterprise*, a seminal report on the role of communications and its strategic importance to CEOs and corporate reputation. *The CEO View: The Impact of Communications on Corporate Character in a 24x7 Digital World* explores what's new and what remains the same in the opinions of leading CEOs.

Big Changes

- **Social media is now mature.** CEOs no longer perceive Twitter, the blogosphere or any other social media as emerging technologies, as experimental or as anything less than full-fledged communications channels that must be monitored, measured and interpreted in the same manner as the traditional ones.
- **The news cycle is irrelevant.** CEOs believe that communications success or failure can now happen at any time and in any place across the globe. They say that while long-term planning is still important, orienting communications toward the long term alone is no longer enough. The company's communications strategy—and the chief communications officer—must be primed for instant action.
- **Reputation matters more.** As more information becomes available about brands, products and services via the multiplying digital channels, CEOs feel that attention is increasingly focused on the corporation and the corporate values that stand behind them.

"Everything is more interconnected now, information is disseminated more rapidly, and the timeline is much shorter. When we make a decision, it's going to everyone—not just the intended audience—so you have to be transparent and you have to be authentic."

The Evolving Role of Communications Executives

- **More CCOs are in the inner circle.** More CCOs report directly to their CEO than they did in 2007. And, more are on their company's executive committee, where most major strategic decisions are made, especially at many larger companies. This definitely does *not* mean that CCOs have left the communications portfolio behind, but rather that, in 2013, the communications portfolio of many companies has become a crucial factor in decision making at every level.
- **Measurement is a key expectation.** CEOs say they now hold CCOs accountable for monitoring, measuring and interpreting the views of a wide circle of stakeholders about a broad

spectrum of brand attributes. They want to know *exactly* which strategic communications initiatives are making *exactly* what impression on *exactly* what stakeholders. While in 2007, CEOs were asking themselves whether this level of scrutiny made sense for their company, now they often demand it.

- **There is only one message.** Given the transparency among stakeholders that social media makes possible, CEOs are clear that tailoring highly segmented messages for different stakeholders is not an option. They prefer a high-level, universal strategy that resonates with *all* stakeholders.

“Our CCO is much more influential now. The job used to be more formulaic—certain messages went to a small number of places, the big mainstream players. Now there’s many more outlets, and correspondingly greater impact.”

CEO Communications Priorities

- **Get broad and deep input.** CEOs say that the most effective communications strategies are generally those with the largest internal buy-in, and they expect CCOs to work in ever-shifting teams to research, synthesize and execute the full range of approaches for all stakeholders.
- **Make the values transparent.** CEOs believe that they and their people are (usually) making intelligent, thoughtful decisions about their businesses, and they want the good values behind those decisions to shine through to all stakeholders. In short, CEOs are looking for a basic, deep-seated accuracy in their company’s communications—not for the CCO to “put lipstick on a pig.”
- **Check your work.** CEOs want to see concrete results from their communications strategy in the form of hard data on stakeholder impressions of brand attributes, although they acknowledge that best practices for this sort of data collection are still evolving.

“We want to make people love what we do.”

INTRODUCTION

The Arthur W. Page Society Board of Trustees established the Page Thought Leadership Committee to examine continually the ever-changing and expanding role of strategic communications within companies; the imperatives and perceptions of C-Suite leaders about communications; and the evolving role of the senior communications executive in the enterprise.

Our goal is to advance our mission of strengthening the enterprise leadership role of the chief communications officer by embracing the highest professional standards, advancing the way communications is understood, practiced and taught, and providing a collegial and dynamic learning environment.

As part of this effort, Page commissioned a survey of corporate chief executive officers on their views and expectations of communications in today's environment. We believe it is important that CEOs understand the potential of the chief communications officer (abbreviated throughout as "CCO") to provide leadership across the enterprise in defining and activating corporate character and authentic advocacy—to use the terms we coined one year ago in *Building Belief*—and ultimately to help the enterprise build and protect brand and reputation.

The purpose of this research is to assess CEO perceptions of the current global communications environment and to provide an understanding of what CEOs view as the ideal role for CCOs in the world's leading companies.

This report focuses on four key issues:

1. How the global communications environment has changed since 2007, the last time The Arthur W. Page Society surveyed CEOs.
2. How CEO expectations for their company's communications function have changed since 2007.
3. What qualities CEOs look for in their CCO.
4. How CEOs view the creation and communication of corporate character.

This study finds that, indeed, CEOs do appreciate the growing complexity of the challenges facing their companies and the criticality of the role of the CCO in helping them succeed in meeting those challenges.

The survey is a follow-up to *The CEO View: Opportunities & Challenges for the Senior Communications Executive* research that was conducted in 2007 as part of *The Authentic Enterprise*, a seminal report on the role of communications and its strategic importance to CEOs and corporate reputation. *The CEO View: The Impact of Communications on Corporate Character in a 24x7 Digital World* explores what's new and what remains the same in the opinions of leading CEOs.

THE GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

The following reviews what we consider to be the global communications ecosystem environment factors that *most influence* how CEOs think about their businesses:

What's New

- **Social media is here to stay.** In 2007, CEOs were warily eyeing social media as an emerging tool that needed to be watched. Now they see it as a major player in their communications strategy, though one that's still imperfectly understood, and they're looking to the chief communications officer for guidance on how to both understand and manage the new channels.

"The changes have already happened—as a culture, we're totally globalized and communication is instant the world over."

- **Message segmentation is dead.** While this trend was in process in 2007, CEOs are now convinced that all communications strategies need to work for all audiences, all the time. So while on the one hand CEOs feel it is obviously crucial to speak frankly to all of their diverse stakeholders, they also are clear that in the current environment those communications simply cannot be in conflict with one another—because sooner or later, everyone sees and hears everything.

"It used to be you could think about discrete audiences, but now they all overlap. What you say to one goes to another, so we spend a lot of time getting our overall message right the first time."

- **There are more stakeholders now.** CEOs say that, again due to the exponential growth of effective channels for communication, they now feel compelled to pay attention to more audiences, and subgroups within those audiences, than they did in the past.

"There's just been an explosion of constituencies. We have to be sensitive to—and have an open line of communication to—many more people than in the past."

What's Still True

- **Reputation is more valuable every day.** CEOs feel that the ever-increasing access to information means that more and more focus is put on the company behind a given brand, making corporate reputation or corporate character that much more valuable.

"The market is demanding more corporate responsibility. As customers become more empowered, as there's more information funneled through the tech channels, there is much greater concern about the corporation behind the product."

WHAT CEOS EXPECT FROM THEIR COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

As the global communications environment has changed, so have CEOs' expectations for what their own communications team can contribute. These are CEOs' top expectations:

What's New

- **High-resolution measurement.** Today, CEOs expect their CCO to deliver an accurate, data-driven picture of their company's reputation at a level of detail that is often very granular. Some CEOs report measuring as many as 30 different brand attributes as experienced by as many as 15 discrete stakeholder groups. While the level of detail and timeliness demanded by CEOs vary, the new emphasis for 2013 is the demand for hard data.

"We need to know that our vision for the company, our business plan, is being clearly communicated to all kinds of stakeholders, and we also need to know to what extent that's happening. Success is defined by how *all* of our stakeholders feel—so all are measured."

- **Rapid response.** CEOs say that even five years ago it was still possible to talk about communications primarily as a set of concrete steps to be taken three to six months in the future. Not anymore. While they still value the long view, they say that the arrival of social media means in practice that full-scale messaging operations must be ready at all times, since major issues can and do arise much faster now than they ever did before.

"As the speed of information has accelerated dramatically, so the speed of reactions must go up, too."

- **Offense as well as defense.** In 2007, many CEOs viewed the communications function as primarily defensive, a way to fend off personal attacks and bad publicity. In 2013, while they still see reputation as fragile, they also see as much opportunity in communications as they do danger, and they put a premium on proactively building relationships with all stakeholders via all available channels.

"Proactivity is necessary. You have to have an arsenal of good deeds and goodwill so that when crises come up, it's not nearly as damaging and it can be contained more easily by responding however appropriate and reiterating the positive attributes the organization already has."

- **Active listening.** Many CEOs say they now incorporate social media and other opinion information into their decision-making process in a way that was unimaginable in 2007. Whereas before they would issue releases, launch campaigns, etc., now they often task their communications people with finding new and better ways to listen to their stakeholders and take those views into account when formulating strategy. In short, being interactive is now seen as the best way to build deep and meaningful relationships with key stakeholders.

"It's more of a two-way street now—there's more of an intelligence function in communications. The information from social media and other inputs, that all needs to be processed by us and in many cases it impacts our decision making."

What's Still True

- **Team orientation.** CEOs see just about every decision as ultimately a team effort, and the more vital the question, the more collective the answer needs to be. In short, the question they ask themselves is rarely "What do I do?" but rather, "Who is in the room for this?" CEOs feel it is an essential skill for their CCOs to be able to work well collaboratively, as well as integrate themselves into both the C-Suite and the rank-and-file of their company.

"The big word is 'partnership.' That's important at the level of the CCO partnering with me, and then also at the level of our company partnering with our customer. It's a partnership at all levels—and it has to be, if we're going to succeed."

- **Global perspective.** Most of the CEOs with whom we spoke oversee multinational operations, and they view even the smartest communications as useless unless they can work (a) in every culture, and (b) in every language for which they have stakeholders. One CEO offered the example of how his company spent a lot of time and effort on their messaging around 'profit-sharing,' which has very different connotations in China, for instance, than it does in the U.S. As this CEO put it, being global means having to think at ever-higher levels of abstraction.

"The world has flattened. We have to tailor messages for 18 different languages and distinct cultures."

- **Strong focus on internal communications.** As it was in 2007, when asked about the role of communications at their companies, a CEO's first thought is not necessarily about the public or other external-facing audiences. They often perceive communicating with their own employees as a major challenge that is exacerbated by the far-flung nature of their operations, and one that is at the same time vital for their company's success.

"Our emphasis is about 50/50 on external and internal communications. We have to do a better job of finding out what employees want and how they want to be communicated with, because everyone needs to be working from the same playbook."

A Note on Reporting Status

- **The org chart is destiny.** CEOs indicate they are more likely to consult with CCOs on issues outside of the traditional communications portfolio, including in some cases even highly technical decisions and/or strategies, when the CCO reports directly to the CEO.
 - By contrast, CEOs whose CCOs report to someone below them view the CCO function as being more tactical than strategic and often more limited to communicating decisions made by others.
 - CCOs with direct-report status are also more likely to be on the company's executive committee, which by definition reviews all or most major strategic decisions.

- **Attitudes vary somewhat by industry and sector.** CEOs who view the public as a major stakeholder are more likely to want their CCO at the table for all strategic decisions.
 - By contrast, CEOs of B2B companies and those who do not view the public as a major stakeholder are more likely to (a) have the CCO report to an executive below them (e.g., the general counsel), and (b) to view the CCO function as more limited in scope.
 - An interesting exception here is CEOs of large financial services companies, who as a rule do view the public as a stakeholder but who nevertheless often do not choose to have the CCO report directly to them.

Direct-Report CEO:

“Our CCO is in all of our strategy meetings—on everything, including engineering, manufacturing and other very technical things. We communicate everything, all the time, and that’s why the CCO is so important.”

Non-Direct-Report CEO:

“While communications have certainly become more complex and challenging, I haven’t necessarily seen any one communications professional become more important in our company. Their job is still to explain the C-level’s decisions accurately.”

THE IDEAL CCO IN 2013

CEOs say these are, broadly speaking, the imperatives they think about when picturing the CCO who perfectly fills the role in today's global communications environment.

What's New

- **Be omniscient, or build systems for transparency.** CEOs indicate that the more, and more-detailed, information their CCO can bring to the table, the more valuable they will be. This includes hard data on the *impact* rather than just the *volume* of communications.

"It's not only the volume of the mentions, it's the accuracy—are we being presented in a way that's aligned with our brand strategy? Measurement is crucial because we have to know where we are on the specifics of our image."

- **Master the 'new' channels.** CEOs do not often describe themselves as especially competent navigators of social media, and in some cases they view social media as a new and somewhat confusing threat. They know it's important and they know it needs to be part of their communications mix, but they also are looking to their CCO to articulate *how exactly* social media impacts their business.

"I think CCOs need to get a lot more savvy about harnessing social media. It's fine to have a Facebook page or a Twitter account, but what do those things actually *do* for our business?"

- **Never sleep.** CEOs feel that the rise of social media has essentially abolished the news cycle. If a reputation issue arises at midnight on Christmas eve in Finland, they want to know that the CCO will be aware of it and have the tools to respond promptly and effectively.

"The public discourse on what we do has become much louder, faster and more difficult to control, and now it happens 24 hours a day. So a key part of our communications department is monitoring. Problems are often first flagged on blogs and Twitter."

What's Still True

- **Know the business inside and out.** One CEO could have been speaking for many others when he said that upon hiring his current CCO (who came from outside the company) he promptly banned the CCO from headquarters for three weeks. The logic was for the CCO to get to know the people and practices in their far-flung offices and operations so that the CCO understood intimately exactly *who* the company was and exactly *what* the company does. CEOs also mention highly detailed internal knowledge of the company and the industry as a *crucial source of credibility* inside the C-Suite.

“The CCO needs to know in detail the overall business strategy, but they also need literacy in things like our corporate finance. Our values have to shine through at every touch point, every communication, and that takes deep knowledge of the business.”

- **Work well in teams.** CEOs tend to view all decisions as team efforts. They realize that they are ultimately accountable, but they also believe that they would be foolish to attempt an important decision without putting it in front of their best minds so that the specific question is evaluated in all of its possible dimensions. In that context, CEOs feel that it is crucial that CCOs be able to work in ever-shifting teams. Lone wolves need not apply.

“We work on a team approach for everything, so the CCO is *always* working with someone else, or a team, to understand what the situation is and how to approach it. He’s not in a room by himself figuring it out; he’s getting lots of inputs and aggregating them.”

- **Bring contacts to the table.** CEOs assume their CCO will bring with them a diverse portfolio of contacts. They want to know that their CCO knows the right people in the proper channels who can effectively execute the communications strategies that the company’s varied teams devise.

“The CCO has to be great at building relationships, and they need to know everyone—journalists, enthusiasts, the little old lady who shows up at every annual meeting, external orgs like nonprofits, editorial boards, regulators, etc. Everyone.”

THE MAKING OF CORPORATE CHARACTER

We asked CEOs how they define “corporate character”—how it gets communicated and how they define success in achieving it. Based on these responses, we have assembled a composite picture of how CEOs think about this term.

What Is Corporate Character?

- **It’s strategy and action that is developed/ executed in a way that is consistent with the company’s values.** The term ‘corporate character’ was not top-of-mind for CEOs, but they most closely associate the term with making business decisions (from strategic planning to day-to-day execution) that are consistent with a company’s values.

“...We have to be doing things right to begin with. What we say has to really be how we act.”

How Is It Communicated?

- **It’s synthesized by the CCO, but it’s the work of many hands.** CEOs expect their CCOs to lead the team-oriented process of distilling the company’s values into communications that both exemplify and propagate the “authentic” spirit of the organization. This, they believe, means that the CCO will be involved in an ongoing conversation with the different business heads, the rank-and-file and all relevant stakeholders.

“Our CCO is the leader of the strategic vision for our character or reputation, but a lot of people work at it. In fact, you could say that every element of the company contributes.”

- **Internal buy-in is just as important as external.** CEOs are adamant that effective communication of corporate character is just as necessary inside the company as it is externally. They see a strong culture as one that intuitively grasps and acts according to the company’s best values, and that transmission of those values can and will ultimately impact the bottom line.

“If you have employees who understand the business and what the plan is, what the strong areas are and what needs special attention, then you have a skilled and motivated team.”

- **It’s in every channel.** Whether it’s a slogan on a wall, a tweet or a speech, CEOs believe that the same values must be reflected across all possible communications. They note that this puts substantial pressure on the CCO, who must understand and be able to communicate the company’s ethos at a high enough level that he or she can apply it to highly diverse forms and outlets.

“Everything good we do or that we’re recognized for is published far and wide via social media, free media. We put it out in whatever way we can think of.”

WHAT DOES SUCCESS MEAN?

- **The business plan is transparent.** CEOs say that in a perfect world, there would be a perfect connection between their company's values and their business plan, meaning that all stakeholders—from the worker on the factory floor, to the C-level executive, to the industry blogger—would have the same understanding of the company's values and how they connect to actions at all times. In short, everyone should know what the larger goal is and how the company expects to get there.

"We don't have a communications plan; we have a business plan that's being communicated."

- **The numbers tell the story.** CEOs will look to the CCO for hard-data confirmation that the relevant values are not only being properly communicated throughout the company, but that the communications are having the desired impact on the stakeholder audiences.

"Measurement is important. We have a scorecard, which has the obvious measures, like employee engagement and external media, but also some not-so-obvious ones, and that scorecard is benchmarked against our brand objectives."

- **Third-party advocates are authentically engaged.** When the proper goals are set and the company's true character is made clear, CEOs expect that a logical next step is to engage individual voices outside the company who, if they share the company's beliefs, may advocate for the company's products and positions via their own unique platform—for example, the Sierra Club on environmental issues, individual bloggers on corporate policies or individual consumers on new products.

"External advocates are a big deal for us. They're absolutely vital for our credibility."

- **Reputation issues are absorbed more easily.** CEOs feel that strong, well communicated corporate character allows the company to turn disappointments into opportunities—that adversity can be a chance to articulate and reinforce for all stakeholders the company's values at a time when unusual attention is focused on them.

"If we have an issue or a production hiccup, then we communicate that too. We use it as an opportunity to get better."

CONCLUSION

- Today, CEOs have a clearer understanding that the corporation itself—and not just the brand, products or services—is under scrutiny by all stakeholders, both internal and external. The interplay of corporate character, corporate reputation and corporate values, and their impact on the business plan, has become a primary focus. This new dynamic provides a tremendous opportunity for the chief communications officer to help drive culture and revitalize company values to make them relevant, authentic and actionable in every corner of the corporation.
- Speed, transparency and globalization continue to be major factors in staying on top and ahead of communications trends and issues. Today's CCO more than ever needs to have the right long- and short-term plans, the right people and the right processes in place to effectively anticipate and respond to issues in real time.
- CEOs want more hard data-driven, sophisticated communications measurement—and interpretation—to better understand today's complex, multi-audience landscape. Mastering the world of “big data” and its specific application to the communications function will be a key skillset and differentiator for the effective CCO.
- CEOs see social media as a full-fledged, legitimate, if sometimes daunting, communications channel. To leverage social media most effectively, the CCO needs to be well versed in all aspects of social media strategy as well as the rapidly changing tactical landscape. This is much more than having a Facebook page or executives with up-to-date LinkedIn profiles; it is about showing real impact on business. This is an opportunity for communications to lead the enterprise in all things social, from long-term planning, to risk management, to helping executives and employees engage in a dialogue with all audiences.
- The CCO's role, responsibilities and value continue to expand. The importance of what the function can do for the enterprise, even beyond the personal attributes of the individual in the CCO role, is on the rise. CCOs should capitalize on the momentum and create repeatable strategic communications operations, “products” and processes to truly establish an enterprise engagement system.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Methodology

The Arthur W. Page Society commissioned Gotham Research Group to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with the CEOs of U.S. and international companies whose CCOs are current Page Society members.

- Twenty interviews were conducted between January 23, 2013 and March 29, 2013.
- Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of CEO participants, lasted 15 to 20 minutes in length and were conducted by phone.
- The CEO's companies reflect a range of industries, locations, annual revenues and *Fortune* rankings, and the tenures of the CEOs varied.
- All CEOs were promised complete confidentiality as an express condition of their participation.

Appendix 2: CEO Sample Details

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS COMPLETED
COMPANY INDUSTRY	
Advertising	2
Airlines	1
Automotive	2
Auto Parts & Equipment	1
Beverages	1
Financial Services	2
Furniture	1
Health Care	2
Household Products	1
Industrials	1
Insurance	2
Media	1
Medical Instruments	1
Packaged Foods	1
Utilities	1
Total:	20
COMPANY ANNUAL REVENUES	
Under \$2B	4
\$2B - \$25B	12
\$26B - \$50B	2
\$50B +	2

Arthur W. Page Society 2013 CEO Research Study Discussion Guide for Interviews with CEOs

Interview Protocol

Purpose/Sponsor of Study

Thank you again for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. The survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes of your time, and is sponsored by the Arthur W. Page Society, the premier professional association for senior corporate communications executives.

The Arthur W. Page Society is a select membership organization for senior public relations and corporate communications executives. Since its incorporation in 1983, the Society has sought to bring together senior communications executives representing a wide spectrum of industries who are interested in helping each other and perpetuating the high professional standards set by Arthur W. Page.

The survey is being conducted exclusively with CEOs in order to help the Arthur W. Page Society and the communications profession at large better equip communications professionals with the tools and insights they need to bring their current roles to the next level and provide maximum value to an organization like yours.

Confidentiality

I would appreciate your candid opinions, and would like to assure you that all of your responses will be used only for research purposes and kept completely confidential. Your name will not be used on our reports, and no remarks or opinions you express will be directly attributed to you or your company. Comments and insights from the interviews will be presented in aggregate form only.

Incentives

In appreciation of your time and cooperation, we will be providing you with:

- A summary of the research findings; as well as
- A \$400 donation to the charity of your choice.

Discussion Topics

As you know, the role of the CEO has changed over the last few years in response to a rapidly changing and dynamic business environment. In this context, some have argued that the role of senior communications professionals, particularly the [CCO/senior communications executive], has also shifted significantly over the past several years.

The Evolution of the Role

- i. How do you think that the role of the [CCO/senior communications executive] in companies like yours **has changed**, if at all, over the past several years?
 - Have they become more/less influential in business decisions *outside* the traditional purview of the communications function—decisions that affect broader corporate behavior and strategy? Why/why not?
 - Do you see the [CCO/senior communications executive] as a member of the senior leadership team, or a trusted advisor?
 - In which kinds of these broader corporate decisions has the [CCO/senior communications executive] become more influential? Less influential? Why? [PROBE: corporate reputation; developing corporate principles/values; cultural change; new media channels; social media]

Looking Ahead

2. Looking ahead, how do you think the role of the [CCO/senior communications executive] **should change** over the next few years to better address your needs and the needs of your company?
 - Which kinds of business decisions *outside* the traditional purview of the communications function should they play a role in? Which ones should they not be involved in? Why?
3. How do you think that advances in globalization and digital technology (and the resulting greater level of transparency companies are subject to via social media) will impact corporate communications strategy in the near and long-term future?
 - In this environment, do you agree that it's becoming increasingly difficult to protect a company's reputation? Why/why not?
 - What does effective corporate communications strategy in this context look like? What are the key elements of a successful strategy? What role should [CCOs/senior communications executives] play in this process?
 - What does the term "corporate character" mean to you? [DEFINE IF NECESSARY: corporate character = an enterprise's unique identity + its differentiating purpose + mission and values; e.g., IBM—*"Building a Smarter Planet"*]
- Do you think building "corporate character" is a critical component of corporate communications strategy today? Why/why not? Do you believe that [CCOs/senior communications executives] should take a leadership role in building "corporate character?" Why/why not? What should their role be?
- Do you think building "advocates who will support the enterprise to their peers [in the social media/outside]" is a critical component of corporate communications strategy in this context? Why/why not? In what way? [PROBE: ideal elements of doing so; internal vs. external stakeholder focus; consumer vs. B2B focus] [PROVIDE EXAMPLES IF NECESSARY: Apple-consumer; IBM-B2B]
- Do you believe that [CCOs/senior communications executives] should take a leadership role in building "advocates who will support the enterprise to their peers in the social media?" Why/why not? What should their role be?
4. What kind of [CCO/senior communications executive] would be in the best position to effectively address these challenges and take on these new responsibilities? [PROBE, AS NEEDED:]
 - What kind of background/experience would they have? [PROBE: skills; previous jobs; areas of expertise; international expertise]

Thank you for your time. Good Day/Night.

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Arthur W. Page

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PAGE PHILOSOPHY AND PAGE PRINCIPLES

The Page Philosophy

Arthur W. Page viewed public relations as the art of developing, understanding and communicating character—both corporate and individual. This vision was a natural outgrowth of his belief in humanism and freedom as America’s guiding characteristics and as preconditions for capitalism. The successful corporation, Page believed, must shape its character in concert with the nation’s. It must operate in the public interest, manage for the long run and make customer satisfaction its primary goal. He described the dynamic this way: “Real success, both for big business and the public, lies in large enterprise conducting itself in the public interest and in such a way that the public will give it sufficient freedom to serve effectively.”

The Page Principles

- *Tell the truth.* Let the public know what’s happening and provide an accurate picture of the company’s character, ideals and practices.
- *Prove it with action.* Public perception of an organization is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says.
- *Listen to the customer.* To serve the company well, understand what the public wants and needs. Keep top decision makers and other employees informed about public reaction to company products, policies and practices.
- *Manage for tomorrow.* Anticipate public reaction and eliminate practices that create difficulties. Generate goodwill.
- *Conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it.* Corporate relations is a management function. No corporate strategy should be implemented without considering its impact on the public. The public relations professional is a policymaker capable of handling a wide range of corporate communications activities.
- *Realize a company’s true character is expressed by its people.* The strongest opinions – good or bad – about a company are shaped by the words and deeds of its employees. As a result, every employee – active or retired – is involved with public relations. It is the responsibility of corporate communications to support each employee’s capability and desire to be an honest, knowledgeable ambassador to customers, friends, shareowners and public officials.
- *Remain calm, patient and good-humored.* Lay the groundwork for public relations miracles with consistent and reasoned attention to information and contacts. This may be difficult with today’s contentious 24-hour news cycles and endless number of watchdog organizations. But when a crisis arises, remember, cool heads communicate best.

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