

THE CEO VIEW:
COMMUNICATIONS
AT THE CENTER OF
THE ENTERPRISE

MAY 2017

Arthur W. Page

ARTHUR W. PAGE SOCIETY

VISION

The Arthur W. Page Society believes that the chief communications officer possesses the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that enterprises operate honestly, responsibly and with genuine respect for the interests of all stakeholders. By establishing and activating corporate character, the chief communications officer earns and maintains public trust, protects reputation and preserves the enterprise's social license to operate. Strong leadership by the chief communications officer ensures that enterprises not only succeed financially but also contribute positively to society and to the communities in which they operate.

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	Executive Summary
7	Introduction
8	Research Objectives
9	The Three Dimensions of the CCO
11	The Global Communications Environment
13	CEOs' Expectations of Communications Executives
15	Conclusion

APPENDIX

17	Appendix A: Methodology
17	Appendix B: CEO Sample Details
18	Appendix C: Discussion Guide
20	Acknowledgments
21	Notes
22	Arthur W. Page Society Board of Trustees
23	Arthur W. Page Society Staff
24	Page Philosophy and Page Principles

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Arthur W. Page Society's 2007 report, *The Authentic Enterprise*, chief executive officers (CEOs) were interviewed about their evolving views on their chief communications officer (CCO) and the communications function in general. We repeated the study again in 2013, resulting in *The CEO View*. Both reports described a growing sense among CEOs that the communications function is becoming a more integral and strategically valuable asset to the enterprise.

In late 2016, we commissioned Penn Schoen Berland (PSB) to interview CEOs of member companies about their views on the communications function in general, and specifically about the role of their senior communications executives. In particular, we looked to assess whether the view of the CCO role put forth in the Page Society's *The New CCO* (2016) matched the perceptions of CEOs. Twenty-four CEO interviews were conducted by telephone in November and December of 2016, each lasting approximately 15-20 minutes. CEOs were assured that no statements made in their interviews would be directly attributed to them or their organizations.

Significant Shifts in Recent Years

- **Total business knowledge is table stakes.** In years past, CEOs have expressed *hope* that their CCO would know all about their enterprise's business in order to more strategically apply communications to advance its goals. Now, many CEOs *require* their CCO to be knowledgeable about the business – from strategy

to operations – so they are able to provide strategic input on issues that span business functions. This is especially true at enterprises with communications departments that are well established and have a broad mandate. At these enterprises, CCOs are expected to have enough business background and insight to weigh in intelligently on areas well outside of their core communications competency, such as supply chain, finance, sales and beyond.

"I don't think a healthy organization can do much without a CCO being involved in every part of the strategy and every part of the operation."

- **Uncertainty is inevitable.** CEOs are practical in their understanding that the business environment can never be controlled. They acknowledge that while political, social and economic conditions may be shifting, uncertainty is a way of life regardless of specific events.

“The business world is always changing, it’s always in a state of turmoil. One of the CCO’s key roles is managing our company’s reputation amid this environment and looking around the corner to see the challenges that may arise.”

- **Always on, always monitoring.** In 2013, CEOs were just coming to grips with the maturity of social media and saw the occasional flare-up as an anomaly. Now, more and more CEOs recognize the need to continuously monitor how customers, employees and traditional media are talking about their enterprises, and be able to engage in those conversations in real-time. What was once a special, crisis-only function has now become, in many cases, a core function for the CCO.
- **Social value must be baked into the business plan.** In earlier studies, CEOs acknowledged the importance of social value as manifested in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), but it was less central, less communicated, and something that often happened far down the chain of command. Now, CEOs believe that communicating how their companies positively impact the economy, the environment and local communities is as important as communicating about the quality of their products/services or their financial status.

The Evolving Role of the CCO

- **Communications is officially a central part of the corporate strategy.** Earlier studies found communications to be an embryonic part of CEO thinking (2007) and then, later, an important contributor (2013). Now (and especially at Fortune 500 companies), the CCO is often recognized as a key leader and contributor to the company’s success and plays a critical role on par with other C-Suite members in creating and implementing company-wide strategy.

- **The CCO must oversee corporate character across the whole enterprise.** In a world where everyone is now a communicator, CEOs expect the CCO to gather inputs for corporate character, help to define it and ensure it is authentic and aligned with the actual experience at all levels of the organization. In this respect, the CCO works across the C-Suite to ensure that corporate character permeates the entire enterprise.

“The CCO facilitates corporate character by looking across the business and ensuring all parts of the organization are aligned – as in, ‘Is the brand aligned with the mission? Is what we’re saying both internally and externally consistent with that mission? Is it consistent with how we communicate with customers?’ That’s a key role for the CCO.”

- **The line between internal and external communications is now blurred.** CEOs say the growth and scope of social media in particular has created a need to effectively arm the workforce to be ambassadors for the enterprise. They realize that, especially around crises, employees are confronted with communications challenges in their “non-work” spaces, in-person and online, and want the CCO to ensure all employees have the tools to respond consistently, legally and effectively.

Corporate Communications Priorities in 2017

- **Get everyone on the same page.** In 2017, CEOs are more aware than ever that a proactive narrative is a key part of both explaining the enterprise’s social value and defending the company’s reputation in the global marketplace. They want the CCO to be a driver of the process whereby the entire C-level contributes to, buys-in to, and then executes on that narrative. Fortune 500 CEOs in particular see this process as a key strategic function that also gives the CCO the long-term organizational

vision to help the CEO make good decisions when challenges arise.

“The CCO has to be someone who is strategic in their thinking and, for lack of a better term, playing chess, not checkers. You don’t need to be just reactive to the latest crisis – the thing you’re dealing with right now. It’s thinking through, ‘Where is this going to lead us?’ and making sure we understand where we’re going.”

- **Determine the ideal KPIs for the organization.** Unsurprisingly, CEOs are most comfortable with concepts that can be measured effectively, consistently and, ideally, across their enterprise’s competitive set. They acknowledge that, at present, there is no single KPI that applies to every enterprise, but they do believe that it’s possible to customize a set of measurable indicators that provide real-time information on the reputational health of the brand. They look to their CCOs to propose and implement the tracking of reputational metrics and are beginning to hold them accountable to said metrics.

- **Help build the CEO’s personal brand externally.** In 2013, CEOs were concerned about social media’s impact on their companies. Now they recognize that to be effective leaders, their own public persona must be aligned with the enterprise’s qualities: authenticity, proactivity and transparency. They see the CCO as the natural enabler, advisor and guardian of their own personal communications, especially when it comes to social media, which many regard as a minefield.
-

“Here’s a legitimate challenge that I have in my own mind that’s unresolved. The degree to which I, the CEO of a consumer-branded company, should be... I’ll just say it – should I be tweeting? My personal Facebook profile, I get message requests from people who aren’t my friends that are complimenting/complaining/whatever about the company. How do I engage as a CEO on social media?”

INTRODUCTION

Though only a decade ago, the world in which enterprises operate today is drastically different than that of 2007. In that year Apple Computer – as it was then called – upended the mobile device market with their introduction of the iPhone, starting a revolution that has affected all sorts of industries – movies, video games, retail, marketing and advertising, streaming media and others. MySpace was outpacing Facebook as the go-to “digital networking” platform (in fact, the term “social media” was not widely used yet), and Twitter didn’t even exist. E-commerce was a tiny fraction of a company’s revenue, and mobile was seldom a communications priority.

Enterprises were only beginning to grapple with these changes, and plenty of others, as we set out through new research to gauge how CEOs’ expectations of the communications function were evolving. We presented the results of that first research in *The Authentic Enterprise* in 2007, reporting that CEOs were looking to their CCOs to take on greater responsibilities, particularly in terms of shaping the company’s actions and its engagement with stakeholders. Nevertheless, the communications function was not always regarded as a strategic one.

We repeated the study again in 2013, resulting in *The CEO View*. We found a growing sense among CEOs that communications was becoming a more integral and strategically valuable asset to the enterprise, not least because of the explosion of new media and engagement opportunities that can impact companies more quickly and significantly than before.

In late 2016, we commissioned Penn Schoen Berland (PSB) to once again interview CEOs of Page member companies to assess their perceptions of the current global communications environment, how these have changed over time, and how the definition of the CCO role put forth in *The New CCO* (2016) aligned with their views. We believe it is important that CEOs understand the potential of the CCO to provide leadership across the enterprise in defining and activating corporate character and authentic advocacy, and ultimately help the enterprise build and protect brand and reputation.

This report focuses on three key areas:

- how CEOs’ views of the communications function relate to the three potential roles of the CCO: Foundational, Integrator, and Builder of Digital Engagement Systems;

- how the global communications environment has changed since 2013, the last time we surveyed CEOs; and
- how CEOs' expectations for enterprises' communications functions have changed since 2013.

Twenty-four CEO interviews were conducted by telephone in November and December of 2016, each lasting approximately 15-20 minutes. CEOs were assured that no statements made in their interviews would be directly attributed to them or their organizations. A profile of the companies represented by CEOs who participated in this research is included at the end of this report.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate CEOs' perceptions of the role that the CCO and corporate communications play in leading organizations.
- Explore the findings from the Arthur W. Page Society's *New CCO* report and assess how CEOs believe CCOs are serving as integral enterprise leaders.
- Build upon knowledge gained from previous research in 2007 (*The Authentic Enterprise*) and 2013 (*CEO View*), including understanding how perceptions and opinions have changed over time.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE CCO

In 2016, the Arthur W. Page Society conducted research among its members to understand the evolution of the CCO's role from their vantage point. The research, detailed in *The New CCO*, identified three core dimensions of today's CCO: 1) the Foundational CCO, 2) the CCO as Integrator, and 3) the CCO as Builder of Digital Engagement Systems.

- The CCO undertakes what are typically considered **Foundational** responsibilities, including serving as a strategic business advisor, builder of corporate reputation and public trust, and manager of stakeholder relationships.
- The CCO serves as an **Integrator**, working across the C-Suite to ensure that an enterprise's corporate character is real, understood and actively practiced at all levels. Corporate character, as we use the term, refers to the alignment of the enterprise's mission, purpose, values, culture, strategy and business model, which collectively represent its unique and differentiated identity.
- The CCO is becoming a **Builder of Digital Engagement Systems**, developing dedicated, data-driven systems and processes for engaging stakeholders – applying data insights to identify their issues; understand their interests, attitudes and behaviors; deliver personalized information, content and experiences; and build mutually trusting and productive relationships with them.

To build upon the research in *The New CCO*, we conducted the research described in this report to assess the extent to which CEOs believe these three elements of the CCO role apply to their enterprise's top communications executives.

"The CCO is one of the most important roles in our organization."

1. THE FOUNDATIONAL CCO

- **The strategic advisor role is paramount.** CEOs see this as a core competency of the high-performing CCO. Many forward-thinking CEOs see all strategic decisions as having an impact on brand and reputation, and they see their CCO as (ideally) having the organizational and narrative breadth of vision that helps even non-communications decision-making.

"I'm looking for more than just what you would expect from a chief communications officer. I'm looking for the role on strategy. He sits on my strategy committee for that reason. He sits on my operating committee. I'm expecting much more than just the communications bit – I'm kind of expecting my right arm."

- **Total business knowledge is the key.** CEOs are clear that the bar to entry for the true strategic advisor is the ability to comprehend all the business's moving parts and how they fit together. When CEOs suggest that their CCO is not fulfilling the Foundational role, this knowledge is often what's missing.

2. THE CCO AS INTEGRATOR

- **The key role is to calibrate corporate behavior with corporate character.** In other words, to ensure that the enterprise acts in ways that are consistent with its brand, and communicates its actions consistently. CEOs understand that once the time and consultation have already been invested to develop and effectively disseminate a unified narrative, someone has to find a way to make it relevant to internal and external stakeholders. Along with the strategic advisor role, this set of responsibilities is a core expectation of CCOs.

“Unless you have a very disciplined approach, the temptation is to sort of try to communicate everything to everyone in an unfocused manner. That can be quite unproductive, to say the least.”

- **Relationships drive success.** A key factor in their CCO’s success as an integrator is the depth and breadth of the CCO’s relationships, both inside and outside the organization. True and active integration, they suggest, requires the ability to earn the trust and respect of a wide range of key players.

3. THE CCO AS BUILDER OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- **Digital platforms are more important now than ever.** CEOs are clear that fully developed digital approaches, tactics and innovation are all key elements of high-performing CCOs, and they expect the CCO to oversee, strengthen and monitor digital communications. CEOs see digital as a platform on which they can demonstrate their personal and brand authenticity and transparency, engage the larger universe of stakeholders, track perceptions, and ultimately measure performance.

“It’s remarkable to have the ability to put messages out to different communities, different constituencies through digital delivery, through social media. Frankly, that’s a big opportunity, but with that opportunity comes the need for discipline and focus.”

- **The notion of “digital engagement systems” is misunderstood.** CEOs interpret the phrase “builder of systems” as highly tactical and far below the realm of the CCO. So while CEOs believe digital systems are important parts of the communications function in their enterprises, they see the CCO’s appropriate role as setting meaningful and strategically-relevant goals for digital systems, rather than operationalizing its digital architecture.
- **Other high-level executives own meaningful parts of digital engagement systems.** CEOs also see the enterprise’s digital architecture as being at least partially owned by the chief marketing officer (CMO), which puts a structural limit on the degree to which CCOs wholly control its digital systems.

THE GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

What's New

- **Predictability is a mirage.** CEOs are acutely aware that, even with a well-supported, unified narrative, brand challenges can come from any part of the globe and any type of stakeholder – even ones with minimal contact with the enterprise. To help counter this trend, CEOs want CCOs to be proactively identifying and mitigating risks before they become threats. By shaping stakeholders' engagement in the brand through their Foundational role, CCOs can exert a level of control over an inherently unpredictable environment.

"We've also learned our brand is really what someone else says our brand is, not what we say our brand is, and being at the center of those conversations and being a bigger influencer in terms of those activities will be a bigger part of what we do."

- **Tactics are highly segmented.** Stakeholders come in many more shapes, sizes, categories and regions than before. CEOs expect their CCO to use a much larger toolbox of tactics designed to reach even the smallest slice of the stakeholder ecosystem. For example, if activists are targeting the brand, CEOs want their CCO to be able to immediately produce the most effective and credible way to engage them. And, as found in *The New CCO*, building digital engagement systems is a particularly effective way to identify and engage the wide variety of stakeholders.

- **All employees are spokespeople.** All employees, rather than key segments of them, are increasingly being viewed as potential brand ambassadors. To help accomplish this, CEOs expect that employees are, at a minimum, educated about the basics and, in the case of a crisis, provided well-vetted responses to questions they might face.

"Internally, people have to understand what our message is and what kind of things we do and don't do and the good things we do, because our people are also our best ambassadors."

What's Still True

- **Transparency is a primary stakeholder demand.** A fundamental goal for CEOs is to have a trusted brand with a positive reputation. As in 2013, CEOs believe the primary way to achieve authenticity is to ensure their corporate behavior is transparent across business functions. Now more than ever, this transparency needs to be reflected also by the employees, which is why CEOs are more focused on enabling employee ambassadors and curating their own social media presence.
- **Social media is the smoke detector.** Many companies are investing in broadening their social media tracking capabilities, which they believe give them and their communications teams the ability to identify and address issues in real-time, before they become more pervasive crises.

- **...But “traditional” media is still a crucial source of validation.** CEOs know that when it comes to evaluating enterprise communications, especially around crises, stakeholders are still more likely to believe third-party validators than the enterprise’s own communications. As a result, the increased focus on social media has been *in addition* to the traditional PR outreach to mainstream media, not in place of it.

“We have a digital and social command center, where we have a team that virtually throughout the day monitors what people are posting on Facebook, tweeting about, what’s trending, where the brand is showing up, and what people are talking about. And, we certainly use that data to make sure from a communications standpoint we are aware of the discussion, we’re preparing where we are going to engage, how we are going to respond, how we are going to communicate to our team. That digital and social component is becoming more and more important for all large companies.”

CEOS' EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVES

What's New

- **Total business knowledge.** CEOs are clear that, to fulfill the role of strategic advisor, CCOs must be able to work across the leadership team to build cross-department solutions to major business problems. This role requires being comfortable with even the minor details of finance, operations, marketing, and any other departments that operate at the C-Suite level.

"The CCO has got to intimately learn the business that the company is in, as well as have a deep understanding of the culture of the company. I think that's just part of ensuring that they earn that seat at the table in the highest priority conversations."

- **Integrate social value into the mission.** CEOs want all stakeholders to know not just how the enterprise is profitable, but how they make the world and the locations in which they operate a better place. Especially at large, consumer-facing enterprises, CEOs expect that the social license to operate be included in their core mission and strategy, and they expect their CCO to help make this happen.

"As you look at millennials and the generation that's coming up today, they are increasingly deciding where to work and where to shop based on 'Does a company make the world a better place?'"

- **Build systems, not just messages.** Previously, CEOs handed their communications team a decision and told them to announce it. Now, CEOs want permanent channels in place for all relevant communications activities: message development, message alignment, speaking, listening, social media, etc. One-off success – the crafting of a great message or even a great campaign – is secondary to developing an integrated, proactive communications system.
- **Identify micro-segments and matching tactics.** CEOs understand that they have more stakeholders than ever before and that a one-size-fits-all approach is not optimal for communicating with them, whether it's internal or external stakeholders or the channels are traditional media, social media or non-media. They want to know how to best reach each of their key constituencies, and they expect the CCO to achieve this capability as a Builder of Digital Engagement Systems.

"I think as we go forward, it will be all these micro-segments of audiences that we need to influence and each one has a different way they get influenced. And to be effective, it's not one size fits all, broad brush. It will be much more targeted. I think that's really part of the evolution of the communication function."

What's Still True

- **Global perspective is a must.** CEOs acknowledge that it is a challenge to develop messages that are both differentiating and effective in countries and media markets across the globe, but from their perspective this is a fundamental part of the CCO's job. So an important part of the CCO's toolkit, then, is a deep understanding of local culture and its implications for the business, as well as the stakeholder environment in different parts of the world where the enterprise seeks to do business.
- **Internal communications must go two ways.** CEOs are clear that they want advanced methods to engage and understand employees. Whether it's gathering local intelligence, understanding what employees think about the enterprise, or ultimately encouraging employees to be brand ambassadors, CEOs want to be sure that systems are in place for employee engagement.

"Today, with the press, with social media, they dictate, to a great extent, the perceptions around your company, and therefore we need to be brutally honest internally with what the real views of the company really are... So often in companies, it can become easy to get in a bit of an echo chamber and talk about ourselves and the things we'd like others to believe, as opposed to what the real world is saying about us."

- **Unify the message.** CEOs understand we live and operate in a world where communications trouble can come from anywhere, and they continue to prioritize the conceptual groundwork and internal consensus-building that produces a single, unified narrative that is accurate, differentiated and adaptable to the different information needs of multiple audiences. In 2017, CEOs are more convinced than ever that a consistent narrative, punctuated by brand authenticity and transparent communications, is crucial. In fact, they see this mandate as a key underpinning of the CCO's rise to the C-Suite over the last 10 years or so.
- **Know everybody.** In addition to assessing the external communications environment, an informal but crucial role CEOs expect the CCO to fill is to be his or her eyes and ears on what's being said among the rank and file. In practice, CEOs suggest, this means the CCO must have absolutely stellar contacts at all levels of the enterprise.

CONCLUSION

- **The CCO role is mature.** For the most part, CCOs have a seat at the table and are not only leading communications, but also providing key input into strategic decisions for most facets of the business.

“Going forward, I would see myself adding maybe even more responsibilities into the CCO role than I currently have.”

- **Foundational and Integrator dimensions are the most expected and delivered.** While success has put CCOs in a position to contribute outside their core competency, their power base continues to be advising the CEO on all aspects of communications and crafting, disseminating and enforcing the enterprise’s unified narrative.

“It’s all very well for me sitting in the CEO’s office to have a brilliant idea or not, but it’s not going to make any difference if the organization doesn’t understand it. Taking that strategy effectively through the veins of the organization is the most important element of their role.”

- There are some areas that need new and better thinking. Against the backdrop of rising responsibility and trust from CEOs, there are some areas that CEOs would like to see more developed that largely fall under the CCO’s role as a Builder of Digital Engagement Systems:

- **KPIs** – Just as CEOs compare themselves to competitors via a set of metrics, many suggest they would welcome the ability to compare communications metrics across enterprises, which would require better and more standardized communications KPIs.

- **Micro-targeting** – As enterprise narratives become unified, social media and other forces have caused the audiences to fracture. CEOs suggest they would like to see out-of-the-box thinking applied to the problem of how to identify and quantify their diverse stakeholders, outside the traditional demographic markers (e.g., age, gender, income, political leanings, etc.) New ideas might include, for example, segmenting more along the lines of attitudes and behaviors.

- **Portfolio of tactics** – Once micro-segments are in place, CEOs suggest they would like to see their CCO execute on a new and broader range of tactics so the enterprise can speak most effectively to members of those micro-targeted stakeholders.

KEY CHANGES IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

	The CEO View in 2007	The CEO View in 2017
Total Business Knowledge	CEOs hoped that the CCO would know about their enterprise's operations to more effectively communicate about them.	CEOs require their CCO to be knowledgeable about operations areas outside their core competency such as supply chain, finance and sales.
Corporate Strategy	Communications was an important contributor to strategy, but many CCOs did not have a seat at the table.	Many CCOs are recognized as key leaders and contributors to strategy , with a role on par with other C-Suite members in creating and implementing strategy.
Social Value	CEOs acknowledged the importance of social value and CSR, but it was not a key component of communications or top of mind when thinking about strategy.	Communicating social value and ensuring that corporate strategy includes addressing the enterprise's impact on the environment, local communities, and the economy at large is top of mind for the CEO and a key role for the CCO.
Authenticity	CEOs recognized that, with more stakeholders empowered with technology, consumers demanded transparency and authenticity from the brand.	Now, it's not just brand authenticity - enterprises and their senior leaders are more frequently in the spotlight, particularly on social media. CEOs are looking to CCOs to help them manage their online engagement so it is authentically consistent with the brand.
Risks vs. Threats	CEOs saw the CCO as a largely tactical role , whose job was to identify and counter threats to the company as they came along.	Now, CEOs want the CCO to proactively identify stakeholder issues and create risk mitigation strategies (e.g. continuous monitoring) that identify and work to address issues before they become threats.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Methodology

The Arthur W. Page Society commissioned Penn Schoen Berland (PSB) to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with the CEOs of companies whose CCOs are current Page Society members.

- 24 interviews were conducted between November 2016 and January 2017.
- Phone interviews were scheduled at the convenience of CEO participants and lasted 15 to 20 minutes.
- The CEOs' enterprise 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 expressed condition of their participation.

Appendix B: CEO Sample Details

Similar to the previous CEO research projects, a range of industries and revenue levels are represented.

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS COMPLETED
COMPANY INDUSTRY	
Automobile & Components	1
Energy	1
Financial Services	2
Food & Beverage	1
Health Care	4
Industrials	1
Media	2
Pharmaceuticals	2
Professional Services	1
Real Estate	1
Retail	2
Software & Services	2
Technology	1
Telecommunications	1
Transportation	2
Total:	24
COMPANY ANNUAL REVENUES	
Under \$2B	7
\$2B - \$25B	12
\$26B - \$50B	2
\$50B +	3

Appendix C: Discussion Guide

Interview Protocol

Purpose/Sponsor of Study

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. The interview should take no more than 10-15 minutes of your time, and is sponsored by the Arthur W. Page Society, the premier membership organization for senior corporate communications executives.

Since its incorporation in 1983, the Society has sought to bring together senior public relations and corporate communications executives representing a wide spectrum of industries who are interested in helping each other and perpetuating the highest professional standards.

The interviews are being conducted exclusively with CEOs in order to help communications leaders provide maximum value to their organizations.

Confidentiality

We 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:

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

Discussion Topics

The Role of Corporate Communications Executives

How would you define the role of the [CCO/senior communications executive] in your company today? Where are they adding the most value now?

Thinking about the most important challenges your organization is facing today, how does the communications function help you address them?

- What value and/or leadership does the [CCO/senior communications executive] provide on these issues?
- Which challenge does your [CCO/senior communications executive] play the most integral role in addressing? How are they adding value in this context?
- How does the role of the CCO differ in climates of change and uncertainty versus times of stability?

We'd like to ask you about a few different roles that a senior leader could have in your organization.

- Do you think this role is an important function in your organization today? Can you see this as an important role going forward?
- Who, if anyone, currently holds this role in your organization? Why did you select them to fill the role?
- Could you see the CCO filling this role? Why do you think they would or would not be a good choice for the role?
 - The [CCO/senior communications executive] can take on what we consider **foundational** responsibilities, including serving as a strategic advisor, minder of corporate reputation and public trust, and manager of stakeholder relationships.
 - The [CCO/senior communications executive] can be an **integrator**, working across the C-suite to ensure that your company's

corporate character is real, understood and actively practiced. Corporate character, as we use the term, refers to the alignment of your mission, purpose, values, culture, strategy, business model and brand, which collectively represent your unique and differentiated identity.

- The [CCO/senior communications executive] can be the **builder of digital engagement systems** or a digital pioneer, developing dedicated systems and processes, driven by data, for engaging stakeholders - identifying their issues; understanding their interests, attitudes and behaviors; and building mutually trusting and productive relationships with them.
- Thinking about these three roles, which is most valuable to you **now**?

We'd like to briefly touch on corporate purpose (or alternately referred to as "social purpose"). If your mission is what you do, your purpose is why you do it, and what value it represents to stakeholders as well as society. What role does the [CCO/senior communications executive] have in creating and communicating your company's corporate purpose?

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?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Arthur W. Page Society would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions to *The CEO View: Communications at the Center of the Enterprise*.

Page Society Thought Leadership Committee Co-Chairs

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Special Thanks to Contributors

Kelli Parsons, founder and chief executive officer, Blue Sky Advisors

Geraldo Rivera, design



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Mubadala

Maril MacDonald
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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 with honest and good intention; provide an ethically accurate picture of the enterprise’s character, values, ideals and actions.
- *Prove it with action.* Public perception of an enterprise is determined 90 percent by what it does and 10 percent by what it says.
- *Listen to stakeholders.* To serve the enterprise well, understand what the public wants and needs and advocate for engagement with all stakeholders. Keep top decision makers and other employees informed about stakeholder reaction to the enterprise’s products, policies and practices. To listen effectively, engage a diverse range of stakeholders through inclusive dialogue.
- *Manage for tomorrow.* Anticipate public reaction and eliminate practices that create difficulties. Generate goodwill.
- *Conduct public relations as if the whole enterprise depends on it.* No strategy should be implemented without considering its impact on stakeholders. As a management and policymaking function, public relations should encourage the enterprise’s decision making, policies and actions to consider its stakeholders’ diverse range of views, values, experience, expectations and aspirations.
- *Realize an enterprise’s true character is expressed by its people.* The strongest opinions — good or bad — about an enterprise are shaped by the words and deeds of an increasingly diverse workforce. As a result, every employee — active or retired — is involved with public relations. It is the responsibility of corporate communications to advocate for respect, diversity and inclusion in the workforce and 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 successes with consistent and reasoned attention to information and stakeholders. When a crisis arises, remember, cool heads communicate best.

Arthur W. Page

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