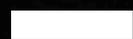


T. F. D.

Be brave,
be bold,
be human.

The new playbook for B2B
tech communications

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This is a guide for the bold. This is a moment where we must Think, Feel, and Do.

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Featured experts



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Katy Alexander

Fractional CMO, Delta.g; deep tech comms and marketing expert



Matthew Byrd

Influencer, Podcaster, Event Host, and Founder of Reality Capture Network



MK Beck

Head of Marketing, Oxford Ionics



Susi O'Neill

Founder, EVA, expert on building trust in tech



The TFD Framework



THINK like a human, not a machine



FEEL what your community needs, not what you want



DO what drives a long-term impact, not what's easy

Introduction

Rethinking B2B

B2B communicators are in a state of strategic paralysis. In the wake of disruption, we can find ourselves frozen, asking the same urgent questions with no obvious answers:

How do we use AI without sacrificing authenticity and creativity?

How do we navigate a media landscape that continues to fragment?

How do we build and protect corporate reputations in the face of seismic geopolitical and economic instability?

The old playbooks no longer apply. This uncertainty has left us feeling adrift in a world of increasing complexity. So, where do we go for help?

We don't have all the answers. Nobody does. But we decided to speak with people who might have some of them. Drawing on insights from leading communications professionals, journalists, influencers, and technology experts, we unpacked key emerging trends in B2B tech comms in the hope of providing a clearer path forward.

This is a guide for the bold. This is a moment where we must Think, Feel, and Do.



Stephanie Forrest,
CEO and Founder, [IFD](#)



Part 1: The power of human connection

In an age dominated by automation and artificial intelligence, human-centric communication has become a defiant act.



After speaking to some of the top B2B communicators around the world, one thing was clear: companies are seeing most success when telling stories about human impact and emotion:

- The CEO who uses your technology to deliver on a promise of sustainability to their stakeholders.
- The startup founder who built their business using your platform.
- Your quantum expert who can convey how manipulating individual atoms can solve problems once thought impossible.
- The family that saved money on their energy bills because a utility company used your technology to optimise the grid.
- The patient whose medical diagnosis was made faster and more accurately by a hospital using your AI platform.

Communicating in a human way seems trivial and obvious. However, compared to those in B2C, B2B communicators have consistently fallen short. For decades, B2C marketing has successfully appealed to the human condition and human emotion, while B2B has often defaulted to logic, data, and ROI, assuming buyers rely on a different set of emotions. But why do we continue to act like the fundamental human drivers of decision-making change with the context of the purchase?

The B2B executive evaluating a multi-million dollar software purchase relies on the same feelings and psychological drivers as the person choosing which smartphone they want next. It's about trust and connection – it always has been and it always will be.

The increasing focus on human-centric content could be argued as a response to:

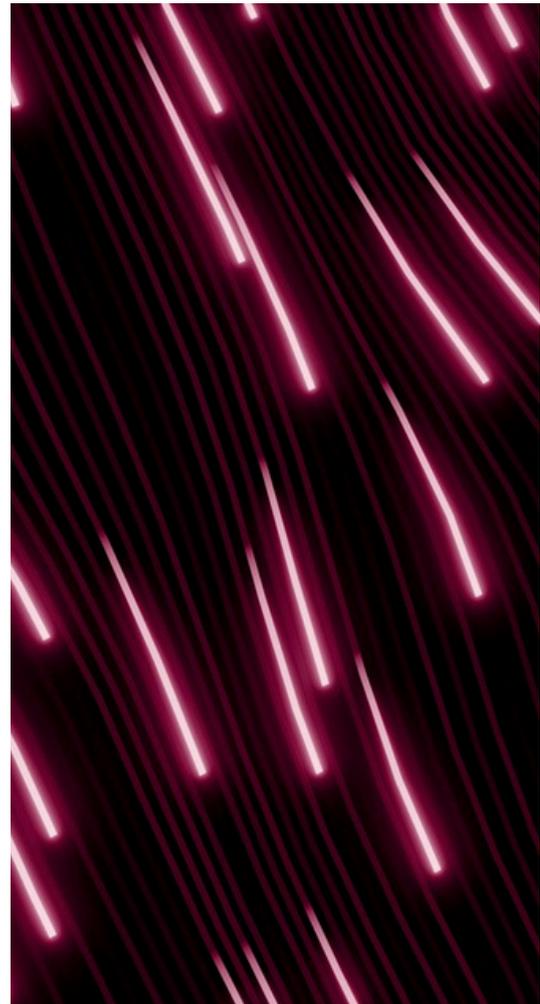
The flood of AI-generated content:

Research by [Siege Media and Wynter](#) found that 72% of content marketers use AI for outlining, 68% for content ideation, and 57% for drafting content. Yet, audiences are becoming adept at spotting AI-generated content and yearn for something more nuanced and connected.

Widespread misinformation: In the UK, 94% of the population has encountered misinformation on social media, according to 2024 research by [The Alan Turing Institute](#). Similarly, misinformation and disinformation were cited by the WEF as the biggest global short-term risk two years in a row. This could be the biggest challenge facing journalism and effective comms in the coming years.

Decreasing trust in institutions: The [2025 Edelman Trust Barometer](#) reports that 68% of people worry that business leaders purposely mislead, representing a 12-point increase since 2021. This scepticism towards leadership significantly contributes to trust erosion in businesses. The [PwC 2024 Trust in US Business Survey](#) revealed that, while 90% of business executives believe their customers highly trust their companies, only 30% of consumers actually do.

A general decline in trust for institutions, coupled with the rise of misinformation and AI-generated content, is pushing audiences to seek out more credible, human sources. Authentic, creative, empathetic, and human communication has become the key differentiator.



Proactively building trust requires a new level of transparency and responsibility, relying on business leaders and experts engaging directly within their audience's communities. Brands must become reliable sources of truth in a low-trust world, prepared to counter false narratives directly and engage on geopolitical issues.

Crucially, this new wave of B2B communication must be natural, not robotic. The uncanny valley of corporate communication serves as a cautionary tale.

“Social media and content from within the company, with the people in the company, is what will bring viewers along to experience who you are, and will help them decide how they feel about you.”

Matthew Byrd, *Influencer, Podcaster, Event Host, and Founder of Reality Capture Network*

Successful B2B tech communicators are looking to foster genuine conversation through communities, new channels, and by avoiding AI wherever possible.

This new era demands that, as communicators, we re-centre our work around genuine interaction.

“Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts: they transform them.”

Theodore Zeldin, *Philosopher and Historian*



Strength in communities

One of the most powerful ways businesses can foster trust and build advocates is by investing in communities.

In this context, a community is a dedicated ecosystem where customers, prospects, users, industry peers, and experts can connect, share knowledge, and solve common problems. Whether it's an executive roundtable, a user-led forum, or a peer network, the brand's role shifts from seller to facilitator, creating a space focused on member value. It's fundamentally human-centric, rather than brand-centric.

By prioritising the needs of its target audiences through a community, a business builds immense trust. This trust then cultivates authentic advocates. When community members share their positive experiences and successes with their peers, their words carry a level of credibility that traditional marketing or advertising simply cannot match.

Launching and running a community isn't easy, though. It needs to be treated like an ecosystem, not just another channel.





“At its heart, B2B is about humans connecting with other humans to be helpful and get something done. So it all flows down to that human connection in community-led marketing.

The biggest difference between community-led marketing and what we could call ‘traditional marketing’ is that traditional marketing is usually a combination of product and brand, and those are your two biggest levers of going to market – “let me talk about my company and make you familiar with the company, or let me talk about my product and get you familiar with the product.”

I think there's a third element of the go-to-market strategy for B2B companies. That is the combination of product, brand, and community working together.”

Derek Weeks, *Chief Marketing Officer, Katalon (ex-Sonatype, ex-Linux Foundation)*



Not every community looks the same. It could be an online forum, a small event, or a WhatsApp group. The optimal community for your company may already exist, or there could be an opportunity to build it from the ground up.

Hubspot Academy

HubSpot didn't build a community of trusting customers just from its CRM software. They built the HubSpot Academy, a community offering free courses and renowned certifications on marketing, SEO, and sales.

Salesforce Trailblazers

Salesforce built one of the largest B2B communities with millions of members. Trailblazers share knowledge, attend local meetups, and help each other master the platform through peer-to-peer learning and gamified skill development.

Communities represent a fundamental change in the communication model. Instead of the company being the sole source of truth broadcasting outwards in a 'one-to-many' fashion, a community creates a 'many-to-many' network. This shifts the company's role from presenter to facilitator or steward. The company provides the space and tools, but the members create the energy and dialogue.

To succeed, community-led comms requires a commitment to two core principles:

A focus on value creation over value extraction

A successful community prioritises giving over taking. The primary goal is not immediate lead generation or sales. It is to create a space of immense value for members through peer-to-peer support, sharing best practices, networking, and direct access to experts if necessary. The commercial benefits, like higher retention and advocacy, will naturally occur within a healthy community.

Authenticity as a currency

Communities have a built-in "corporate B.S." detector. The tone and engagement must be genuine and human. Polished marketing copy fails in a community setting; communication must be authentic, transparent, and human. This means empowering engineers, product managers, and support staff to engage directly with users, celebrating members' successes more than our own, and admitting when we don't know something. As comms professionals, we need to relinquish some control and trust our experts to get it right. It's about briefing them beforehand on the overall tone and message, not micromanaging the process.

“The scientific community has tended to distrust marketing and branding, equating ‘brand’ with spin, so communications could sometimes be very dry and academic, alienating end customers. As we continue to show that brand can clarify, not distort, we’re able to lean into a more human and genuine tone, and it’s landing with the next generation.”

Katy Alexander, *Fractional CMO, Delta.g (ex-OQC, ex-Digital Science); deep tech comms and marketing expert*

“Businesses will start to see the benefit of making content that is personal, that has faces to it, that shows the character of their company, that brings them in to experience the company. Not just content about your brand, product, or service. Nobody cares about your logo until they care about the feeling of your company.”

Matthew Byrd

When executed with care, a community-led approach delivers significant and measurable business results.



It nurtures the future customer pipeline

A community's value is a powerful engine for nurturing potential future customers. While most marketing focuses on the small percentage of the market actively looking to buy, a community more effectively engages the vast majority who are not by being consistently helpful and building genuine human connections over time. That way, when they are ready to buy, we're front of mind.

“It goes back to fundamentals: only **5%** of your market is actively buying today, so yes, you absolutely need your product and company information easily accessible for that audience. But the real strategic opportunity is with the other **95%**. You need to think about how you're serving them before they're 'in the market' and 'ready to buy'.

When they finally enter the market, you want them thinking, 'This company needs to be on our shortlist.' And that won't happen because you've been pitching them for two years straight. It happens because you consistently shared insights and experiences that made them better at their jobs. You earned their trust and consideration by genuinely helping them succeed, not by selling to them.”

Derek Weeks



It acts as a real-time focus group

Communities provide a space for honest and open dialogue and feedback, acting as a 'focus group' for improving existing products and services, while even creating new ones.

“The traditional social media approach worked relatively well until social media companies decided that they wanted to deprioritise news and corporate account pages and, instead, prioritise individuals and creators ... So, all of a sudden, the people who had the power were these individuals who had large followings of people who trusted them.

So, people tended to trust news organisations and companies less, and people tended to place their trust more in these creators, influencers, and thought leaders, and that's where people get their information from now.”

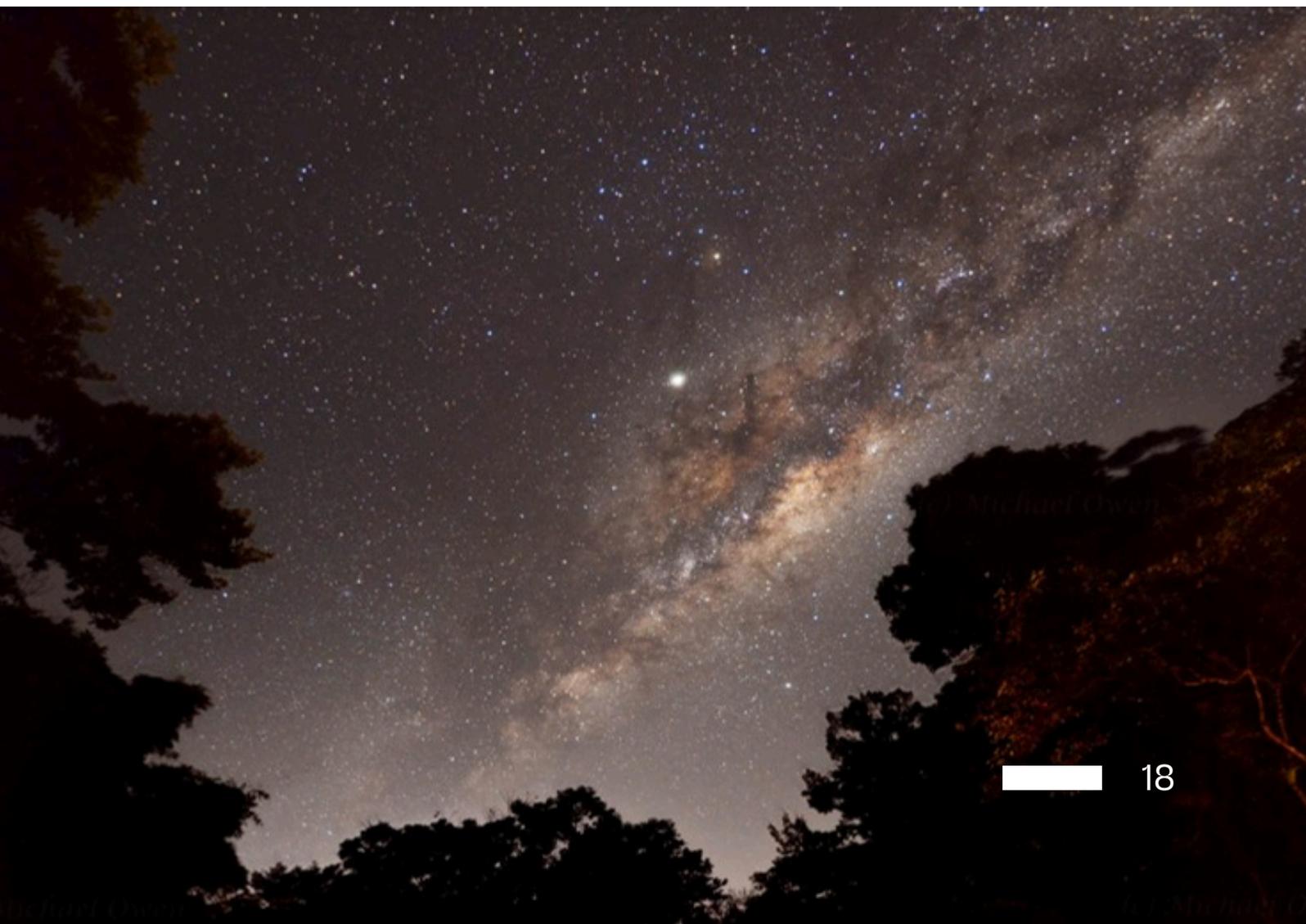
Derek Weeks

It can drive authentic revenue generation

Trust built within a community directly translates into commercial opportunities, often more effectively than traditional sales pitches.

“Community-style events [were] a leading source of revenue generation for us. We weren’t pitching them to come listen to us talk about our product, and we’ll give you a demo, and then maybe you’ll buy from us. It was very much us bringing together the top 30 CISOs in New York working at financial services institutions, and we’re going to talk about these relevant topics for this industry, share best practices, and share insights. We would just make sure we had at least one Darktrace advocate in the room.”

MK Beck, *Head of Marketing, Oxford Ionics (ex-Darktrace)*





It breaks through to the C-Suite

Communities provide a space for honest and open dialogue and feedback, acting as a 'focus group' for improving existing products and services, while even creating new ones.

“As a marketing tactic, community building was hands down one of the most effective tools for us at Darktrace to break through to the C-suite. We would gather 20 of our top C-suite customers, put them in a room or host a roundtable, and facilitate a discussion about the market, about trends, about how we protect data. We’d just let them speak to each other, and we built trust in our brand simply as a facilitator of these amazing conversations. For our customers, the level of networking they were able to do with each other ... you couldn’t pay for that kind of exposure and networking.”

MK Beck

But, how do you measure the success of a community?

Looking at broad metrics, like total community members, is helpful. But you can also link to business outcomes, like:

- What percentage of new customers were interacting with our community in the six months before purchasing?
- What percentage of the customers who renew our service are engaging with the community?

“What we've seen is that the more our customers and our prospects engage with the community, the higher the return on investment to our bottom-line revenue.”

Derek Weeks



The rise of the individual

Individual influencers and creators are now seen as key stakeholders in B2B communications, with 75% of B2B marketers already using influencers to boost brand credibility and reach new audiences, for example. This evolution was accelerated by a fundamental change in how social media platforms prioritise content to favour individuals over corporate accounts.

“The traditional social media approach worked relatively well until social media companies decided that they wanted to deprioritise news and corporate account pages and, instead, prioritise individuals and creators ... So, all of a sudden, the people who had the power were these individuals who had large followings of people who trusted them. So, people tended to trust news organisations and companies less, and people tended to place their trust more in these creators, influencers, and thought leaders, and that's where people get their information from now.”

Alexandru Voica, *Head of Corporate Affairs and Policy, Synthesia (ex-Meta, ex-Ocado)*

The shift has pushed communicators to explore new and emerging avenues to get their news heard.

“Influencer strategies are the new frontier. I think people now like their news to be more simply explained on social media with a very specific, personal style.”

Amalia Kontesi, *Chief Communications and Marketing Officer, NATO Innovation Fund (ex-JPMorgan Chase, ex-Google)*



Platforms like LinkedIn, TikTok, and Reddit have now become primary sources of information and connection for a lot of people. This extends to the media, where journalists are now using these platforms to source many of their stories.

“I get pretty much all of my content that I don't get from reading the tech press, from LinkedIn ... It's also a great way for me to get guests for my podcast ... I feel like I'm writing a lot more about the founder startup ecosystem than I ever did at the BBC. And that's explosive on LinkedIn. You know that's where all the founders are, all the startups that want to be on LinkedIn. It's very rich pickings for me, both in terms of contacts and content.”

Jane Wakefield, *Freelance tech journalist (ex-BBC)*

There is now a growing importance for business leaders themselves to be active and present on social media, using platforms like LinkedIn to champion customers, share insights, and show up as the human face of the company.

“Experts, executives, and employees are creating content that educates, inspires, and builds community. The challenge is to show up authentically. As generic content becomes more common, leaders with unique points of view will excel.”

Jennifer Erickson, *EVP of Global Communications, Mastercard (ex-GE, ex-Motorola)*

TikTok also can't be ignored, and is becoming a major platform for authentic engagement when used in the right way. We explore this in more depth in Section 4.

“I think that you're going to see more business leaders becoming content creators, becoming media personalities, and having a social presence.”

Matthew Byrd

Having executives who are engaged on platforms like LinkedIn is a powerful opportunity to rise above the competition. It requires actively using the platform: commenting, engaging with people, and sharing interesting posts. Comms professionals just need to be brave enough to see it as an opportunity to stand out, rather than a risk.

This principle extends beyond the C-suite to all subject matter experts.

“A corporation's employees are its best spokespeople. It's grassroots advocacy from employees that really helps improve the reputation of a company. And it is a communicator's job to make sure that whatever they do externally also resonates internally, and the employees are empowered to speak to the work.”

Amalia Kontesi

This is heavily dependent on leaders and experts showing up authentically. The comms team's role is to facilitate this, not fake it. Act as a strategic partner who trains spokespeople, creates opportunities for genuine engagement, and helps capture and amplify their authentic voice.

Navigating the flood of mediocrity

The rapid adoption of AI is creating a wealth of generic B2B tech content, since it relies on replicating and repackaging what already exists.

And the problem will get worse. Research indicates that, as GenAI systems are increasingly trained on GenAI-produced data (also known as “model autophagy disorder”), overall content quality will drop even more dramatically than it already has.



“Even in the very few short years that we've had AI ... we can already recognise the hallmarks of AI-generated content. It's pretty easy to say, ‘oh, I think AI created that.’”

MK Beck

“AI just makes [content] all the same and bland and wordy or technical.”

Susi O'Neill, *Founder, EVA (ex-Kaspersky, ex OgilvyOne); expert on building trust in tech*

This has started to create a damaging feedback loop: businesses overuse AI to produce content, leading to a flood of noise, which results in lower audience engagement and eroded trust, making effective comms much harder.

“There is a flood of mediocrity coming out because of AI. It is making our jobs in B2B comms and marketing much harder. People are tuning out because of the noise. When ‘what my skiing trip taught me about B2B marketing’ passes as thought leadership, you know we’ve entered the age of mediocrity.”

Katy Alexander

Uninspired content undermines the uniqueness of a brand by eroding the critical human touch needed for building trust and emotional connection.

Beyond the issue of quality, AI-generated content faces a significant trust deficit. A recent B2B marketing study from [Astroten](#) demonstrated this by showing 500 people an identical ad, with various backstories about how the ad was created. When told the ad was generated in 10 minutes by AI, only 38% of buyers trusted the brand. However, when they believed it took three months to create with a specialist agency and an origami artist, trust jumped to 59%.

This perception gap presents a clear opportunity: in a sea of automated content, brands that invest in authentic, human-produced creativity can stand out significantly.

“It's almost a differentiator now to not do it. To take the time and the budget to be creative, think about the human element of the story, and create something that's well produced.”

MK Beck



“There is nothing like authentic storytelling, and I don't think that has changed. So, although we have to be measured and we have to be factual, at the same time, if you want to win hearts and minds, very rarely do you win those with facts.”

Amalia Kontesi

Journalists, in particular, are doubling down on human-centric stories. They want to see technology – and the people using it – in action.

“I encourage my reporters to go to places because you just get much better quotes, much better colour. You could do this job entirely remotely (as we did during the pandemic), but you lose something that way. Going to see something, whether it is a piece of technology in action or a place where research is happening, that effort to go and see something makes me more invested in the story. If I just speak to you on the phone, I'll still be able to write a story, but it'll be nowhere near as good as if I had spent half a day with you.”

Alok Jha, *Science and Technology Editor, The Economist (ex-The Guardian, ex-ITN, ex-BBC)*

In fact, even AI companies are investing in editors, which speaks to the value businesses are placing on human-led content

Our opportunity as B2B tech communicators is to share human-centric stories with the media – like end-user stories about the technology that include striking visuals.

So, if AI is a no-go for producing content, where can we use it? AI excels at efficiency-driving tasks, like research and analysis, and as a "sparring partner" that augments our human capabilities without sacrificing authenticity.

“I approach [AI] in the sense of how can I automate, or how can I get rid of a lot of the mundane tasks, rather than how can I avoid hiring a person and replace them with AI. For example, I will write the first draft of a newsletter, and then I'll ask ChatGPT: ‘If you were a reader of Bloomberg, what would you think?’ So, it's asking for that feedback, as opposed to asking the AI to write the newsletter for me.”

Alexandru Voica

“We see AI as an efficiency and productivity tool – one to more effectively communicate and measure our work. For example, we might use it as a digital sparring partner and editor or to identify actionable insights.”

Jennifer Erickson

“I do think the companies that will succeed in using AI are the ones who use it as a force multiplier and not as a replacement.”

MK Beck

Part 1 key takeaways

1) **Make human impact central to your storytelling**

Impactful B2B tech content – whatever the format – highlights real people, emotional stakes, and tangible outcomes, especially when telling tech stories.

2) **Communities are the new growth engine**

Brands that facilitate peer-to-peer value, instead of just shouting about themselves, build pipeline, insight, and loyalty.

3) **Harness your true centres of influence**

Map the individuals – influencers, YouTubers, academics, podcasters, whoever they may be – who your audience trusts and listens to. Develop an extensive strategy that taps into those centres of influence, then nurture those relationships over time.

4) **Turn subject-matter experts into creators**

With social media platforms like LinkedIn and TikTok favouring individuals, it's time to empower spokespeople to speak authentically there as well.

5) **Focus on human-created content**

Over-reliance on generative AI leads to bland, forgettable content. The brands that stand out and drive long-term brand value will be those investing in original, human-led storytelling.

6) **Use AI as a creative sparring partner, not a crutch**

Think of AI as a sparring partner, helpful for editing and research, but never as a substitute for creative thinking.

Part 2: From the press to the boardroom

A social media storm can shift customers' expectations overnight. New regulations can upend entire industries. A reputation crisis can wipe billions off a company's value in hours. Organisations need communications leaders who can see around corners and guide them through the chaos.

This is why communications has become an increasingly strategic and influential business function. Smart companies put their communications leaders in the boardroom. We're not just expected to draft press releases anymore; we help shape strategy, manage key relationships, and steer the company through an unpredictable world.

Communications professionals now:

- Serve as cultural interpreters, risk assessors, and strategic advisors.
- Help organisations understand shifting societal values.
- Identify threats to reputation before they materialise.
- Navigate an increasingly fragmented media landscape.
- Orchestrate communications across a complex ecosystem of stakeholders, including investors, regulators, partners, employees, communities, and industry peers.
- Provide insights that directly inform business strategy.

This new reality has changed how B2B tech comms should be measured. Traditional metrics of media mentions, reach, and engagement often fail to capture strategic business value. We need new measurement frameworks that directly connect our communications activities to business outcomes: revenue generation, market share protection, talent retention, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder trust.

This isn't about collecting data for data's sake (a common pitfall which has plagued marketing and communications for years). Instead, we need to identify the right data for actionable strategic insights and report it in a way that is understandable to a broad audience. Measurement without purpose creates more noise, not clarity.

Example considerations

Reputation: How is sentiment shifting over time among key decision-makers?

Share price: Is there a correlation between comms activity and share price?

Digital presence: How are our comms strategies helping to build digital presence - e.g. increasing share of search, Gen AI mentions, or driving traffic to our site?

Sales: How is comms driving inbound leads or supporting sales conversations? Do accounts that engage with our content have a higher conversion rate?

Talent: How are our new internal communications efforts affecting employee engagement scores?

Public affairs: Are there shifts in sentiment from regulators following our public affairs engagement?

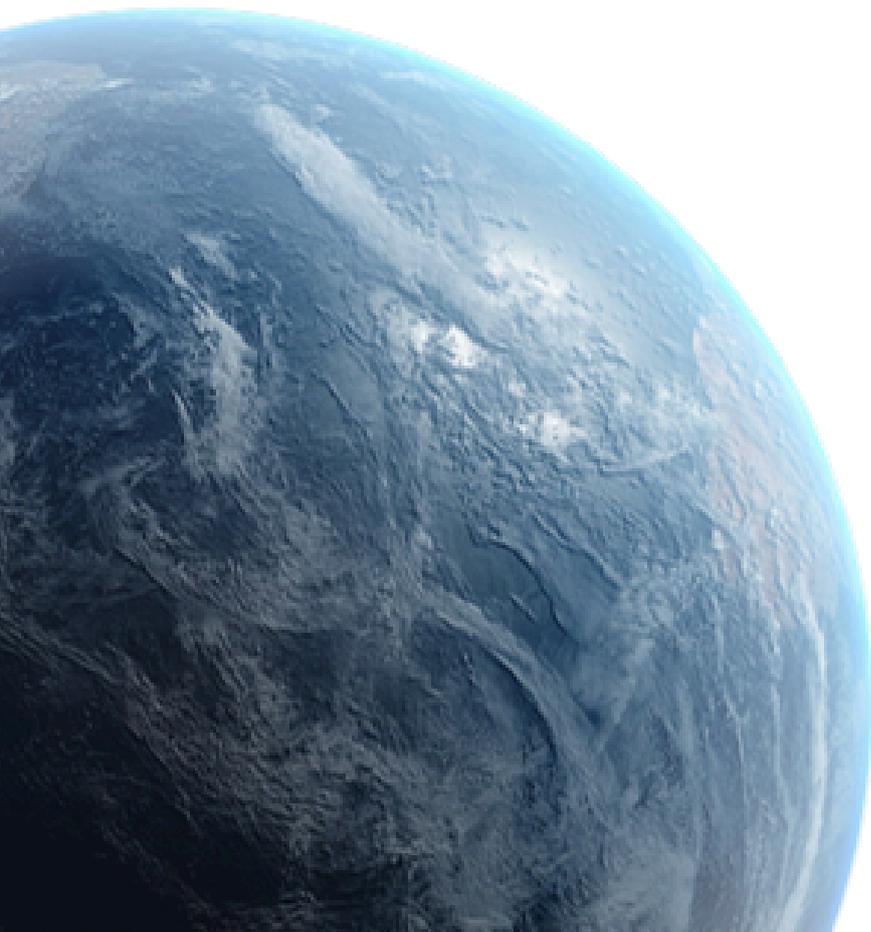
Crisis management: During a crisis, how quickly do our key messages penetrate the conversation and get adopted by trusted, third-party voices?

If we are to achieve and retain a seat at the boardroom table, our comms efforts need to demonstrate concrete business value and provide evidence-based counsel that other leaders expect.

The future of B2B tech comms belongs to leaders who can think like strategists while executing flawlessly, recognising that their work can shape the direction of the business, manage risk, and drive genuine organisational change. Communications defines identity, not just messaging.

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.”

Warren Buffett, *Investor and philanthropist*

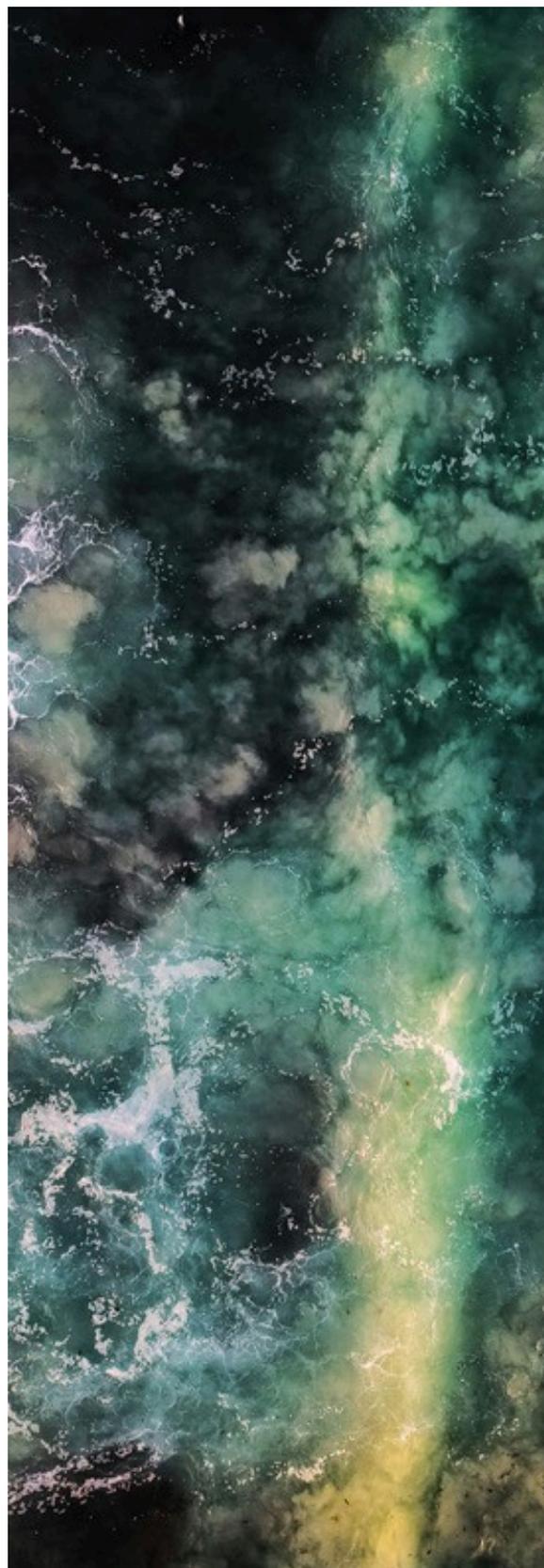


Channel fragmentation and the battle for attention

The traditional media landscape no longer exists. In the last year alone, major newsrooms have faced significant cuts, a trend that shows no signs of slowing. In 2025, leading outlets including Fortune, Business Insider, and The Washington Post all announced staff cuts, while veteran tech publication TechCrunch pulled its editorial operations out of the UK and Europe.

Shifting advertising models? A decline in public trust in the broad media? AI replacing journalists? The reasons why this is happening would be the topic of a completely separate paper, but the reality for communicators is clear: our old model for media relations is no longer sufficient.

We now live in a fragmented ecosystem of dozens of different media platforms, each with its own audience and value. This presents both the risk of being spread too thin and the challenge of ensuring key audiences are not missed. Businesses need to spend time and resources researching where their audience is gathering and focus exclusively on a handful of publications and key channels.



Despite this upheaval, traditional media still holds significant sway, particularly when capturing the attention of business leaders and the C-suite. Business publications and niche trade titles alike still hold significant power and influence with their dedicated audiences and shouldn't be overlooked.

“Our written articles [print and website] are number one for us, because that's where we put most effort to find and fact-check stories. It goes through multiple layers of editing. It's really rigorous.”

Alok Jha

“When it comes to traditional media, a lot of the leaders at Fortune 500 companies still have high trust in media.”

Alexandru Voica

This fragmentation has also made owned content more essential than ever. With newsrooms shrinking, companies are increasingly building their own platforms to share news and relay their brand.

“Owned content has never been more important. On social, 95% of views are driven by algorithmic recommendations, not followers. Relevance is the new currency in this content-driven world. We experiment with new content types on LinkedIn and have elevated our newsroom to a “digital magazine” where we share human-first breaking news.”

Jennifer Erickson

A successful pivot to owned channels depends heavily on the principles of community building. Not forcing the brand down people's throats, but producing genuinely engaging and helpful content to establish the company as a valuable resource rather than just a vendor.

While text-based media still holds immense value, new formats have evolved into a spectrum of short- and long-form video and audio content.

“At the very beginning, the formats were text, broadcast, TV, and radio. Now it's evolved to short-form and long-form video. So short-form video, TikTok, Instagram, one minute or less, and then long-form video, two hours of a podcast on YouTube.”

Alexandru Voica

This shift has seen traditionally B2C platforms, like TikTok, become critical transgenerational channels for B2B tech brands. TikTok is now the fastest-growing social media platform, becoming the fastest social network to hit one billion active users. Its largest growth segment is the 25-34 age group. According to insights from the platform, 80% of its global audience discovers new interests there, and 61% of B2B marketers are now using it to humanise their brand and reach decision-makers authentically.

Success on these platforms requires a new approach, not simply repurposing corporate content. It demands a willingness to experiment with creative formats while managing brand reputation.



“We started experimenting with different formats on TikTok, and some of our videos were getting millions of views. We had one where we made an avatar count to a million. It's simple stuff like that that people find interesting. We also made videos where we added avatar faces to experiences that are typically voice-only – like the person who says ‘the next train is going to be five minutes late.’ All of a sudden, that voice had a face, and it got people talking. So doing creative stuff like that is successful, but being careful to avoid reputational risks.”

Alexandru Voica

Leading B2B brands like Adobe, Shopify, HubSpot, and Salesforce are already active on TikTok, sharing tutorials, demonstrating use cases, and presenting a more relatable, human side of their business. This works because it taps into human-centric communications: people buy from people, and even B2B buyers respond to authenticity, clear storytelling, and an approachable tone.

Since the pandemic, podcasts have become an extremely influential channel, offering a unique way to connect experts with audiences.

“Podcasting negates travel boundaries. It opens up opportunities for us to connect with wider experts ... Everybody loves podcasting. You can create really good written content off the back of them, too.”

Susi O'Neill

“Podcasts, particularly in the U.S., shaped the news cycle and ultimately the election. We are always looking at new media spheres of influence for customer communications – podcasts, influencers, and new platforms.”

Jennifer Erickson

While many B2B tech brands have attempted to jump on the podcast bandwagon, many have failed to do so successfully.

“There's an awful lot of corporate podcasts that should probably never have been made. There's a lot of rubbish out there.”

Jane Wakefield

Success lies in keeping it interesting and educational. For example, Google DeepMind has Hannah Fry, the famous science broadcaster, present on the various ways AI is changing the world.

It also needs to be authentic. Even if it's a branded corporate podcast, people don't want to be sold to. It's the same with branded content on TikTok and Instagram. We don't seem to mind ads if they're hidden within authentic content.

“The [podcasts] I keep subscribed to are all from publishers. The challenges brands have is you can't necessarily be super consistent. Trying to do it every week means a loss in quality. So, doing limited seasons is generally the recommendation for a brand.”

Susi O'Neill

Even older, more established media outlets are embracing podcasts to add depth to their reporting and reach new, younger, and more female-skewed audiences.

“[Podcasting] has become very big for us in the last few years. It's a way of getting into the nitty-gritty of complicated ideas through conversation. We don't always just repeat what's in the print section. We always add stuff. We add voices. We have interviews with the actual scientists or people who are case studies. And it's a different way to interact with our content. It's a younger, more female audience for the podcast.”

Alok Jha

The opportunity is there for companies that have experts who are open and keen to talk at length about their topic of interest, as shown by the sheer amount of new media-owned podcasts.

“For comms people, I think that the key learning is that we need access to people for [podcasts]. It's one thing for me to get an interview on the phone, but then to get someone in a studio to record them, even better. If they can come into our studio, we can do an hour-long interview, film it, and use clips on our website and on social media too.”

Alok Jha

At the same time, text-based content is splintering into more niche, subscriber-only newsletter platforms, like Substack and Beehiiv. This trend is directly linked to the increasing influence of individual creators and voices. For brands and communicators, this shift underscores the growing power of owning a direct relationship with an audience.



“A big thing for me moving to Substack was that I realised that [LinkedIn] doesn't even have any way of emailing or communicating or messaging any of my subscribers other than just posting a new newsletter saying ‘this is big’. So I think we’re moving to a space where we need, as B2B communicators, to own as much of our audience relationship as possible. And that relationship gives us power.

Having the ability to get my newsletter into email inboxes is powerful because that means I can talk to people for however long they subscribe. The old-fashioned thing of building an email list is important, but moving beyond that to build communities of interest.”

Susi O’Neill



Measurement: from vanity to value

As our role as B2B tech communicators becomes more strategic, the methods for measuring the success of our work must adapt. In this new world of complex B2B buyer journeys, traditional metrics fail to capture the full impact of social and owned channels and the nuanced ways in which audiences engage with content.

B2B communicators are moving away from simplistic vanity metrics – like raw media mentions and AVE (Advertising Value Equivalency) – towards sophisticated, business-aligned KPIs (like the quality of engagement), to more clearly show how communications contribute to tangible business outcomes.

“We need to look at metrics in a different way. Of course, getting no response or no readers is objectively bad. But if you're getting the right kind of readers and, particularly from a B2B point of view, if it is helping you build your reputation. So, when you do make your cold emails, people go, ‘Oh, yeah. I've heard about you before. Oh, yeah. I read that thing.’ It's also giving you thought leadership material that you can use in your sales conversations later on, particularly if you're a brand. Informal metrics like ‘is this leading to better sales conversations?’ That's an important metric to measure longitudinally over time.”

Susi O'Neill



Navigating risk and reputation

Modern B2B tech communications is now a key strategic advisor to the board, guiding decisions on geopolitical, cultural, and regulatory risks. No longer just “part of the marketing team”, as communicators, we play a central role in addressing external issues that affect the whole business, from market shifts to national security.

This advisory role is the very definition of providing strategic counsel beyond simply acting as a support function. As a result, our remit now often includes areas like public affairs, which are key to managing government relations, funding, and national security issues.

“I have seen comms teams integrate public affairs into their day-to-day responsibility list in a way that I hadn't seen so much before. Public affairs is important: having good stakeholders and relationships in government, especially in departments like DSIT [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology] for UK-based tech companies, is really valuable because it adds an extra layer of validation.”

MK Beck



In today's volatile world, a reactive approach to crisis is no longer viable.

The rise of social media has amplified the reputational risk of communication missteps, increasing pressure on organisations to respond authentically and in real time.

With fast-moving geopolitical shifts and declining public trust in institutions, proactive crisis management must now form a core part of strategic communications. We must anticipate threats — internal, economic, or geopolitical — and build clear response plans before crises unfold.

“Crisis preparedness has never been more important. Mapping out all the potential crises your organisation could find in its path in the next year or so, whether they are internal changes in leadership, things we’ve always had to deal with, or external, like the state of trade, state of the economy, or state of warfare. I think it's just never been more important, not because you want to make changes when something happens, but because you have the time when the pace is not crazy ... ‘I have this template, this is going to work, that's not going to work, I'm going to throw it out.’ But when you have had a headspace, you've remained vigilant and prepared.”

Amalia Kontesi

In a world of constant scrutiny and misinformation, trust is our most valuable currency. Strategic comms leaders help build and protect that trust through consistent action and transparent governance, especially in tech, where messaging is complex and closely watched.

“Our approach on when and where we lend our voice is driven by a strong values framework. When we address the world, we have to be sure that what we're saying is true to our business strategy and to our corporate conscience and respects the boundaries where our individual opinions may differ.”

Jennifer Erickson

This requires a level of maturity and foresight, positioning the communications function as a source of stability and reason within the organisation.

“My mentor at JPMorgan Chase always said to me: “It's very important for the communicator and for a company – whether it's a bank, or a VC, or a governmental organisation – to be the adult in the room.” I think that it is really important to show up with a certain amount of measured and calm thinking. That means relying a lot on facts and figures, relying a lot on reports, making sure you know you have a policy agenda that's set in place, and your communications reflect that policy agenda. So your advocacy is the result of long-term strategic thinking and planning that is important both to your organisation and the broader ecosystem that you're serving.”

Amalia Kontesi

Part 2 key takeaways

1) **Comms belongs in the boardroom**

The comms function is now critical to navigating risk, shaping reputation, and guiding the business through volatility.

2) **Prioritise fewer, more relevant channels**

Focus on the platforms and media your audience actually uses and adapt content to for those formats (e.g. short-form video, podcasts, niche newsletters).

3) **Shift away from vanity metrics to business impact**

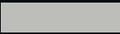
Measure what matters: reputation, trust, stakeholder engagement, and contribution to commercial outcomes, rather than just volume or reach.

4) **Prepare for a crisis before it hits**

Comms leaders must anticipate and prepare for geopolitical, cultural, and regulatory risks, not just react when things go wrong.

5) **Public affairs and comms must align**

Especially in tech, where policy and funding shape opportunity, comms teams must work hand-in-hand with government affairs.



Conclusion

From paralysis to progress_

We've heard from the leaders navigating the storm. So, perhaps the path forward is not so shrouded in fog.

The industry may be suffering from paralysis, but it doesn't have to be permanent. Instead of being daunted by the speed of change and the increasingly fragmented landscape, B2B tech comms professionals can turn this unsteady ground into a launchpad.

The only question left is, where do you start?

Turn insight into impact using a simple, human-centric framework: Think, Feel, Do. This is your compass for breaking the inertia.

T. F. D.

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