WHAT'S NEW IN COMMUNICATION AND BEYOND

AUTHOR: MICHELLE WLOKA, MANAGING EDITOR

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Geopolitical shifts, new technologies, and changing audience and employee expectations continue to keep organizations on their toes. The eight reports that follow offer insights into the growing role of corporate diplomacy, the transformation of public relations, changes in news consumption, and the challenges of building digital trust and adapting to new ways of working.



Read the full report: Skovgaard Petersen, C. (Ed.) (2026). Megatrends: The foundations of long-term change. Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies. https://www.cifs.dk/read-listen/reports-knowledge/megatrends

TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATION

Megatrends: The Foundations of Long-Term Change

The report by the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies (CIFS) identifies 11 structurally distinct megatrends shaping the long-term future of societies, individuals, and organizations worldwide. The megatrends span geopolitics, economics, demographics, climate and sustainability, social life, health, technology, infrastructure, and urbanization, and they capture shifts expected to persist over decades. Examples include:

- **Power through networks** describes how power and authority are increasingly distributed across transnational networks and digital infrastructures.
- **Shifting world order** reflects the transition from U.S.-led unipolarity toward a multipolar global order, shaped by China's rise and the growing autonomy of middle powers.
- **The rise of embedded AI** highlights the transformation of AI from a tool into an integral part of societal and economic infrastructure, raising questions about human autonomy, technological dependencies, and control over decision-making.

The report's megatrends were developed through a structured process of hypothesis formation, evidence-base evaluation, and consolidation, involving a multidisciplinary CIFS team and selected external experts.



Read the full report: Caroll et al. (2026). 2026 future of corporate affairs report: The age of corporate diplomacy. Edelman. https://www.edelman.com/2026-future-corporate-affairs-report

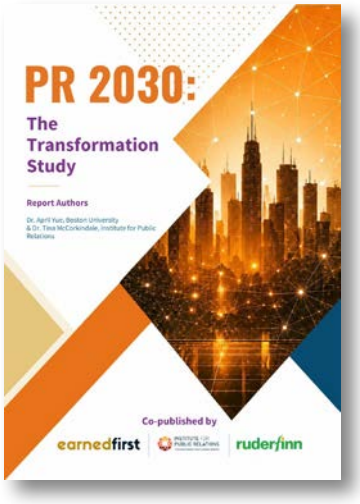
Future of Corporate Affairs Report: The Age of Corporate Diplomacy

Edelman's *2026 Future of Corporate Affairs Report* stresses the growing importance of corporate diplomacy in managing diverse stakeholder expectations. The urgency is underscored by the finding that 68% of respondents experienced a communications or reputation issue with an immediate business impact in the past year.

The report characterizes corporate diplomacy as the ability to advance business priorities while maintaining the relationships essential to a company's operations and growth. Based on a survey of more than 150 senior corporate affairs and communications leaders, it finds that nearly two-thirds of respondents say CEOs are increasingly expected to act as corporate diplomats. The report identifies three key challenges:

1. Building trust with stakeholders who cannot simply be directed;
2. Identifying political, cultural, and reputational developments early enough to act; and
3. Using AI to analyze information while applying the contextual understanding and specialist expertise needed to interpret it.

Against this backdrop, corporate affairs is taking on a more consequential role. Nearly eight in then respondents say the function is involved at the earliest stages of decisions related to external issues, while almost seven in ten report a significant expansion of its role as a strategic adviser. Four requirements emerge as particularly important: better intelligence, a broader skill set, more effective use of AI, and clearer ways to demonstrate business impact.



Read the full report: Yue, A. C., & McCorkindale, T. (2026). PR 2030: The transformation study. Institute for Public Relations, Earned First, & Ruder Finn Asia. https://instituteforpr.org/pr-2030-the-transformation-study

PR 2030: The Transformation Study

The *PR 2030: The Transformation Study*, developed through a collaboration between the Institute for Public Relations, Earned First, and Ruder Finn, explores the future of public relations and corporate communication amid significant professional change. Based on quantitative data and open-ended responses from 221 in-house and agency communicators across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the report examines the capabilities, challenges, and opportunities shaping the profession.

The report finds that communications is increasingly recognized as a strategic function, yet limited budgets (74%), gaps in data analytics and measurement skills (61%), and insufficient understanding of the value of public relations (61%) continue to constrain its influence. AI literacy emerges as a key capability over the next three to five years, alongside business acumen, strategic thinking, and measurement expertise.

Measurement remains a major challenge, as organizations rely on traditional media and social media metrics while seeking to demonstrate broader effects on business performance, reputation, trust, and behavior. Looking ahead, the report highlights the need to balance technological innovation with human expertise, particularly as AI creates both new opportunities and concerns around workforce displacement, quality, and integrity.

NEWS AND AUDIENCES



Read the full report: FT Strategies, & WAN-IFRA. (2026). Future newsrooms study 2026: A global benchmark of how newsrooms are changing, what they are prioritising and where they are going next. https://www.ftstrategies.com/en-gb/insights/future-newsrooms-study

Future Newsrooms Study 2026

The *Future Newsrooms Study* by FT Strategies examines how news organizations are adapting their strategies, workflows, structures, investment priorities, and skills to a changing media landscape. Based on 448 survey responses from newsrooms across 86 countries, the report identifies four interconnected gaps that hinder implementation: strategy, audience trust, capabilities, and skills.

For instance, although audience engagement is a leading strategic goal and business sustainability is the highest-weighted priority, alignment between overall strategy and editorial decisions is uneven. Twenty-five percent of newsrooms remain primarily reactive. The findings also highlight changing storytelling and format priorities: explainers are the most widely used storytelling approach (74%), short-form video is the leading format priority (79%), and audience forums and live events are gaining importance (51%).

However, audience-first ambitions are not yet consistently reflected in newsroom workflows. Most newsrooms still create content for a primary channel before adapting it for others, while only 21% start with a defined audience need or group.



Read the full report: Egan, J., Robertson, C. T., Ross Arguedas, A., Newman, N., Nielsen, R. K., Mukherjee, M., & Fletcher, R. (2026). Digital News Report 2026. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2026

Digital News Report 2026

The *Digital News Report 2026*, commissioned by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and based on almost 100,000 survey respondents across 48 markets, examines how people consume news amid political, economic, and technological uncertainty. Conducted by YouGov through an online survey, the study identifies three key themes:

1. News consumption is increasingly shaped by platforms: social media and video networks are now used for news more widely than television news and news organizations' own online channels.
2. Online video creators and influencers are becoming more prominent sources of information, while AI is beginning to influence how people access news. As a result, news reaches audiences through increasingly fragmented channels, making consumption less direct and more incidental.
3. Trust in news is declining: it fell significantly in 29 of the 48 markets surveyed, reaching its lowest overall level since the report began tracking this measure.



Read the full report: Chui, M., Roberts, R., & Catlin, T. (2026). McKinsey Technology Trends Outlook 2026. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/tech-and-ai/our-insights/the-top-trends-in-tech

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL TRUST

Technology Trends Outlook 2026

McKinsey's *Technology Trends Outlook 2026* examines 14 technology trends shaping innovation and business. The analysis is based on quantitative indicators of innovation, investment, interest, talent demand, and organizational adoption, as well as interviews with leaders and experts. While four trends are AI-specific, AI is a driver across all trends, enabling more autonomous robotics, accelerating software development and scientific discovery, and reshaping cybersecurity and semiconductor technologies. Beyond the AI ecosystem, developments in life sciences, genomics, brain science, mobility, immersive reality, sustainability technologies, and quantum computing are opening up new possibilities.

Across the 14 trends, the report identifies five overarching themes that business leaders should understand to navigate technological change and prepare their organizations for the future:

1. Machines are gaining autonomy.
2. AI is accelerating breakthroughs faster than organizations can absorb them.
3. The window for cyber defense is shrinking.
4. Hardware and software are increasingly codesigned for specialized AI workloads.
5. Growing AI energy demand is putting pressure on power grids.



Read the full report: Thales Cloud Protection Licensing. (2026). 2026 Digital Trust Index. Thales. https://cpl.thalesgroup.com/digital-trust-index

2026 Digital Trust Index

The 2026 *Digital Trust Index* by Thales examines how digital experiences shape trust among consumers, employees, business partners, and security leaders. Based on insights from more than 15,500 users across 13 countries, the report explores user expectations around how digital technologies, services, and their providers protect stakeholders' interests and uphold societal values. It concludes that the gap between these expectations and what organizations deliver has never been wider. According to Thales, digital trust rests on three core pillars:

1. **User experience:** Digital interactions should be easy to use and provide a positive experience across channels.
2. **Security:** Visible safeguards, such as multifactor authentication and encryption, help build user confidence.
3. **Privacy:** Users need assurance that organizations protect their personal and sensitive data.

The findings reveal considerable skepticism, largely driven by a lack of understanding of how personal data is used: Only 16% of users say they understand this, while 77% feel uneasy about AI acting on their behalf. The first digital interactions

are particularly critical in establishing trust. Sign-ups, logins, and account settings can determine whether users perceive an organization as safe, competent, and worth engaging with. Yet 68% of respondents experienced issues with websites or apps in the past year. These experiences do not just undermine trust and damage brands; they can also result in immediate lost revenue and weaken future customer relationships.



Read the full report: Poynton, S., Flynn, J., Scoble-Williams, N., Reyes, V., Mallon, D., & Cantrell, S. (2026). 2026 Global Human Capital Trends. Deloitte Insights. https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/human-capital-trends.html

WORK AND HUMAN CAPITAL

2026 Global Human Capital Trends

Deloitte's *2026 Global Human Capital Trends*, developed in collaboration with Oxford Economics, outlines how organizations need to rethink work and workforce strategies in response to accelerating technological and business change. The report draws on a global survey of more than 9,000 business and HR leaders across 89 countries, complemented by additional surveys of workers, managers, and executives, as well as more than 50 expert interviews.

Findings highlight that seven in ten business leaders identify speed and adaptability as their primary competitive strategy for the next three years. Against this backdrop, the report argues that reinvention is becoming a continuous requirement rather than an occasional response to disruption, and identifies three particularly important tipping points:

1. Organizations need to redesign work around the complementary strengths of people and AI, moving beyond simple collaboration between the two.
2. As cost-driven approaches reach their limits, organizations must focus more strongly on creating value and responding to changing demands.
3. Curiosity, experimentation, and ongoing development are becoming essential. Organizations need to rethink roles and capabilities continuously, enabling employees not only to adapt to change but also to actively shape it.

AUTHOR



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