IT'S PERSONAL

The New Rules Of Corporate Reputation

WE | Brands in *Motion*

7th Edition

Contents

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Introduction

We have a disconnect.

Consumers and employees across the globe in 2023 have a heightened focus on three key issues: rising prices, our global climate crisis, and fears of job loss in an AI world. **Survival instincts are kicking in** as people navigate this increasingly unaffordable world on fire. The onslaught of these existential threats is upping the pressure on brands to figure out how they can be part of the solution.

Many brands know they need to make long-term commitments to solve bigger systemic issues, but they aren't acting effectively or quick enough on the immediate needs. For consumers, the anxiety is urgent. It's personal, and it's now.

That gap — between the action people say that they need to see now and what companies have been talking about — is evidence of a rapidly shifting communications world. WE Communications' new survey of nearly 15,000 people in seven markets around the globe, conducted between June 27 and July 6, 2023, shows that as anxiety ratchets upward, consumer expectations are changing. Companies must know how to reprioritize and focus if they want to remain relevant and trusted in an increasingly cynical world.

Aspirations of social justice, DE&I and gender equality — collective issues that rose to prominence over the past six years — remain essential foundational elements of a strong corporate reputation. Yet the 2023 research shows that other urgent, personal concerns around cost of living, sustainability, employee welfare, and data security and AI have leapfrogged to the top of the list. **Brands need a new set of rules to balance their attention and prioritization.**

Traditional approaches to communication and years-old corporate reputation strategies must evolve. People say brands that don't get it right are tone deaf, that companies need to be in tune with immediate needs and concerns, or they risk losing customers and employees. Brands that pivot by sharpening their focus on the personal impact of global issues will see long-lasting positive effects on their corporate reputation and business success.

Brands need a new set of rules to balance their attention and prioritization.

How brands balance the factors that add up to a strong corporate reputation can make or break a company. The old rules of media relations, crisis communications and employee engagement are evolving. Brands must respond to today's accelerating demands. It's time for communications leaders to embrace a new set of rules.

Key Findings

Worldwide, people are anxious

60% say brands should be talking more about how they are addressing the rising cost of living.

50% say brands that take a stand on societal issues are just trying to sell more products and services.

They are looking to brands for real help

92% say strong employer-employee relations are key to a great corporate reputation.

64% say responsible use of technology — including AI and customer data — is quickly becoming a bigger factor in reputation.

And they want companies to succeed

8 out of 10 respondents say reputations can be improved.

People say these are the most authentic ways for companies to show they care:

- **Being transparent with data** that proves a company's actions and results **(76%)**
- **Customer testimonials or reviews (61%)**
- **Content that explains** what the company is doing and why **(53%)**

What We Learned

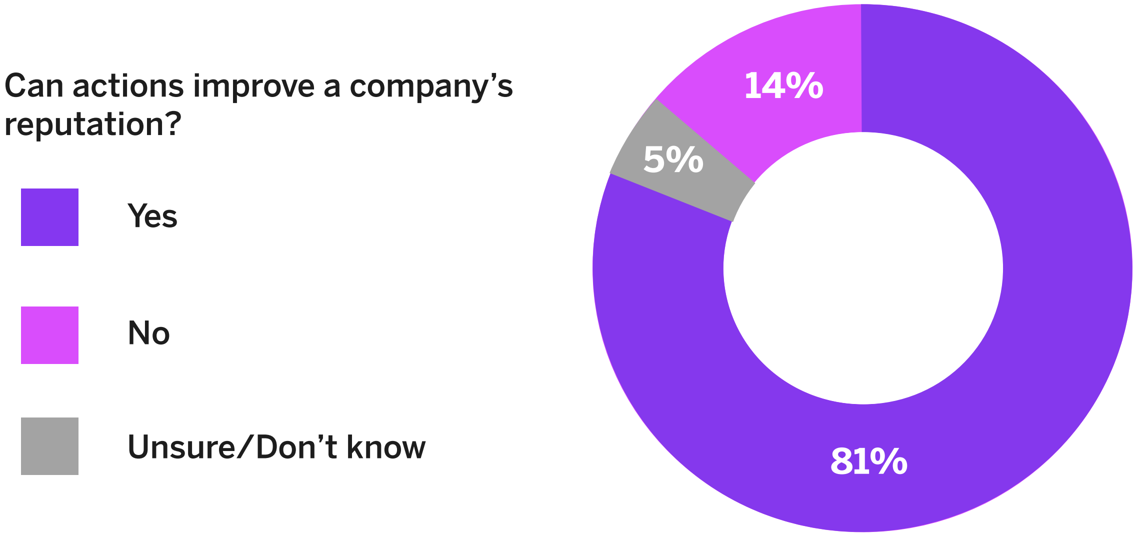
Courage to Focus and Reset

With our 2021 research, WE introduced the "The Bravery Mandate" and an imperative to "Fear Less. Do More." The audiences we surveyed then wanted companies to be bolder about doing purposeful work. In 2022, our research showed people wanted companies to "Make it Real" by showing their work on priority issues.

In 2023, our Brands in Motion research continues to build on these themes with a heightened perspective that some brands are not meeting their commitments — and people know it. In fact, 61% of those surveyed told us they believe that fewer than half of brands are delivering on their commitments. It's how those companies talk about this and move forward that will determine their corporate reputation.


Ayden Ong, WE Singapore

Reputation Redemption



Standing still isn't an option. People want companies to show they are resetting their priorities, that they hear the worries of today and that they are responding. The brands that can navigate tough economic conditions by recommitting to just a few, select sacred goals — while making it clear that they hear what people need — will be viewed as bold and courageous.

In fact, 8 out of 10 respondents say reputations *can* be improved, chiefly by taking responsibility for past mistakes and creating policies that address the root cause of issues. And practical goal commitments are preferred to ambitious goals by an 18 percentage point margin, which extends to 23 percentage points in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

People know brands can't do it all, but they want them to focus and follow through on their promises — because in 2023 it's personal. **They want brands to listen to them, to speak authentically to them and to do what they can to help them**. A company's reputation depends on those personal connections.

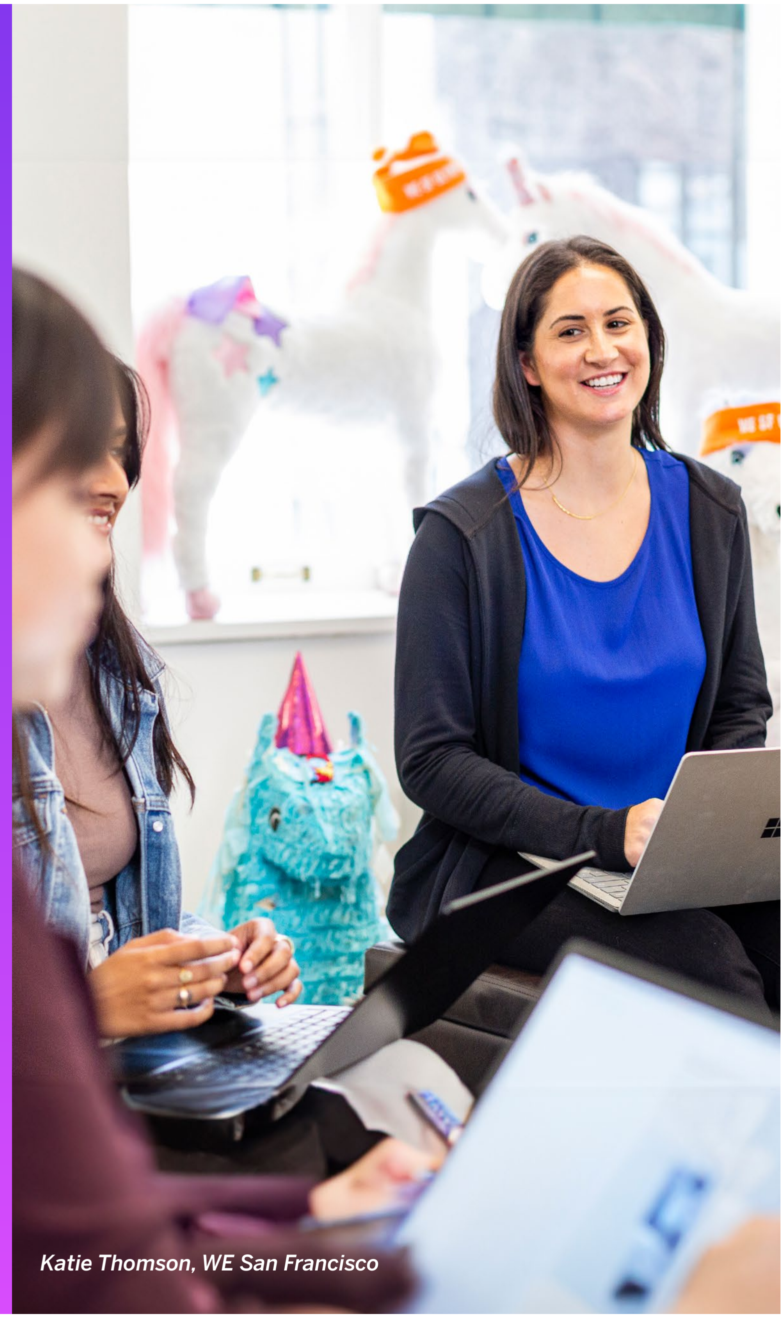
They want brands to listen to them, to speak authentically to them and to do what they can to help them.

Surging Cynicism

The public is increasingly skeptical that brands are delivering on their existing commitments to do things that make the world a better place. And respondents say **the path to reduce this skepticism is to provide far greater transparency** than we've seen — in the form of hard data, employee testimonials, admissions of shortcomings and more.

Our data shows that fewer than half of brands are perceived to be delivering on their commitments. In a 4-percentage-point drop from WE's 2022 survey, consumers believe that only 44% of brands that have spelled out their commitments are delivering on those promises.

It is also no longer enough to operate ethically and responsibly, perform well and take purpose-led action. Half of survey respondents — a jump from 46% in 2022 — said brands that take a stand on societal issues are just trying to sell more products and services.



Katie Thomson, WE San Francisco

The rules are shifting, and in response to that global surge of cynicism, brands have to reset with both honest and real communication that builds trust.

That presents a significant challenge, but the data also shows a path forward. More than half of respondents (54%) said they **want to hear more from brands during times of uncertainty.** And 3 out of 4 agreed that brands should be transparent in communicating to the public about what they do in response to current and emerging issues in society.

Being transparent with data that proves a company's actions and results is ranked No. 1 by 76% of people as the most authentic way for companies to talk positively about themselves, followed by customer testimonials or reviews (61%) and content that explains what the company is doing and why (53%).

The Glassdoor Effect

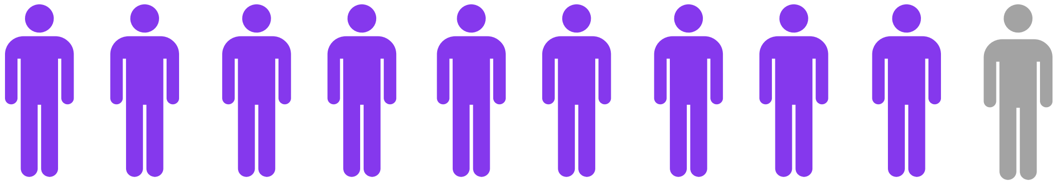
Sharing details about things like pay and benefits beyond tight employer-employee relationships used to be taboo. But it meant companies could build a strong corporate reputation on performance and purpose alone — sometimes while treating their employees poorly.

Social media, crowd-sourced rating sites and a shift in cultural norms about work have largely changed that, creating what's been dubbed the ["Glassdoor effect."]

Today [salary secrecy] is waning, and in many parts of the world new laws now require pay transparency.

The list of factors that contributes to corporate reputation is expanding. Beyond business performance, companies now must also consider how they talk about employee experience, satisfaction rates, benefits and support. Those factors, and in-house communications that used to be "for internal use only," are now public knowledge. They influence consumers, partners and other stakeholders.

Relationships Build Reputation



9 out of 10 respondents believe employer-employee relations are essential characteristics for a company to maintain a greater reputation

In fact, 9 out of 10 (92%) respondents believe that employer-employee relations are among the essential characteristics for a company to build and maintain a great reputation.

A deeper dive into which characteristics of employer-employee relations contribute most to a company's reputation shows:

- Provides pay and benefits that allow people to provide for themselves and their families (85%)
- Respects work-life balance (83%)
- Employees seem to enjoy their work/ like working for the company (83%)
- Provides opportunities for employees to learn and advance in their careers (81%)

Meanwhile, those factors continue to play a key role in hiring too. More than half (55%) said a company with a strong corporate reputation can attract and retain top talent.

Social Issues Still Matter

Elizabeth Herrera Smith, EVP, Head of DEI

One critical challenge to emerge in the 2023 research is the tension between consumer expectations and companies' finite resources. Increasingly, people say companies have a responsibility to help bring social stability — and they want companies to act on a growing list of issues.

But even as consumers are calling on companies in 2023 to speak out more about issues such as cost of living (60%), employee pay and benefits (54%), the climate crisis (41%), and the responsible use of tech and AI (38%), they want them to **keep talking about and maintain a focus on social justice, DEI and gender equality.** Eighty percent of respondents said brands are talking either just the right amount or not enough about those social issues.

And if brands slip on those issues? About 40% said it is not acceptable for companies to delay their commitments to ethnic and racial justice or gender equality. Consumers are holding companies to a high standard.

> **When we create workplaces where employees know that they matter, our teams and the work we do are better for it.**
>
> Elizabeth Herrera Smith, EVP, Head of DEI

Even as this requires companies to weigh their priorities carefully, WE views this as a positive sign that consumers believe in long-term commitments to social justice issues — and that companies should approach them as a core part of their business. WE Communications Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Elizabeth Herrera Smith, writes more about this opportunity here.

What It Means

The 2023 survey data is clear: Consumers are feeling the pressures of inflation, climate change and the tech advances threatening their jobs. The pressures feel personal and immediate, and they want companies to play a bigger role in easing that pressure.

That's not all, though. People also want companies to keep up the work they've been doing toward their purpose goals — initiatives around social justice, DE&I and gender equality, in particular. These things are now considered table stakes and must continue to be part of the solid foundations of corporate reputation.

People want brands to demonstrate their commitment to making the world a better place, yet they're cynical about companies striving to do good. **It is a precarious balance for brand leaders to get it right** and one that requires constant refinement to maintain its equilibrium.

People around the world are confronting financial and climate stressors threatening them personally. And companies are balancing the call to act now, against their own pressures to tighten budgets and shore up resources.

The brands that can best communicate how they're taking care of their employees and their customers will succeed. But striking the right balance, conveying an authentic message, and maintaining a strong corporate reputation requires a new strategy, a brand-new set of rules. This is the future of communications.

The Four Rules of Corporate Reputation

01
Prioritize the Personal

Immediate, personal concerns that have universal reach — notably the rising cost of living and the climate crisis — are top of mind for the nearly 15,000 people WE surveyed globally in 2023.

Companies need to stay the course on issues that align with their values, but brands also need to address the existential dread that many feel about an unaffordable world on fire — literally, in many places.

In 2022, consumers told companies to "make it real." Now, in 2023, they want companies to know "it's personal" — and to acknowledge the anxieties and help individuals manage through all of it.

Scroll through the daily news, and stories of war, wildfires, catastrophic floods and crippling inflation are routine and universal. Personal accounts like one headlined "The Climate Crisis and Colonialism Destroyed My Maui Home" responding to the devastating Hawaii fires, or "I Lost My Home to the Sea," are becoming shockingly familiar around the globe. People are feeling the effects of these macro issues at an extremely personal level.

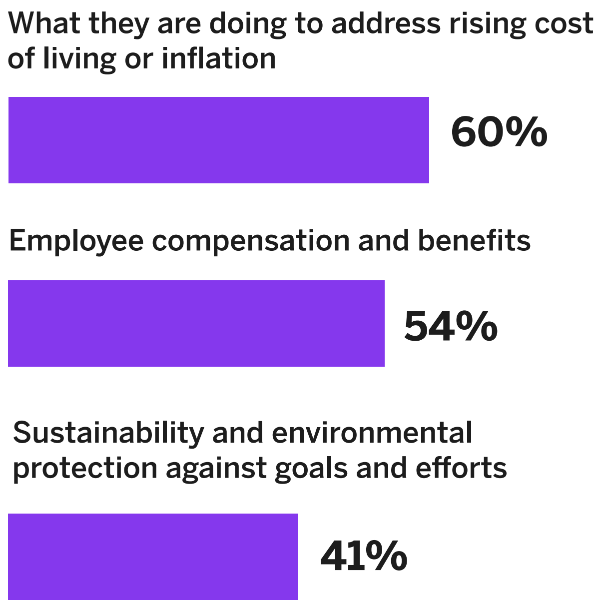
The challenge for companies is significant: Our data shows 60% of people said that brands are not talking enough about what they are doing to address the rising cost of living or inflation. And 1 in 3 (33%) said that delaying environmental commitments in an economic recession would not be acceptable to them either.

Meanwhile, the disconnect persists. Business leaders and nonmanagement employees are divided on how much companies should talk about money issues. Among employees, 61% say companies should be talking more about inflation and the rising cost of living, while only 44% of business leaders agree. And 56% of employees say companies should talk more about worker compensation, while only 37% of business leaders agree. Companies must bridge that gap.

The good news is that some are getting it right.

More, Please!

People say brands should talk more about these topics



People are feeling the effects of these macro issues at an extremely personal level.

Inflation Aid From John Lewis Partnership

In the UK, where inflation has been stubbornly difficult to tame, department store company John Lewis Partnership announced in late 2022 that it would be "forgoing profit" to help customers, employees and suppliers of its John Lewis and Waitrose retailers navigate the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

The move came after the company noted a 28% spike in sales for its value-based house brand in late 2021, indicating growing consumer concerns about inflation and energy costs. Looking to boost customer loyalty at a time when many people are feeling financially stretched, the company offered employees cost-of-living aid and said it would maintain a focus on value as the country was squeezed by the highest inflation in 40 years.

Dame Sharon White, John Lewis partnership's chairman, said: **"We are responding to the cost-of-living crisis by supporting those who need it and by stepping up our efficiency program."**

Image Credit: John Lewis & Partners

Oatly's Carbon Footprint Labels

Oatmilk maker Oatly describes itself as a sustainability company and is using its packaging to prove it.

In its irreverent style, the people behind Sweden- and U.S.-based Oatly explain on their website how they're tackling the serious problem of climate change with labels that show the carbon footprint — measured in CO2e — of each product it sells:

"With an impending climate emergency on the horizon we thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if it was easy for people to see and compare the climate impact of different products right in the grocery aisle before even deciding what to put in their cart the same way they can see the labeling of fat, sugar and other nutritional information?'

"We didn't put CO2e out there for consumers to see just for fun. We did it in more of a **'We believe that consumer empowerment should be a law, if not a human right'** kind of way. But change doesn't just happen randomly. Someone needs to lead the charge. So, we thought, 'Why couldn't it be a small oatmilk company that paves the way?' And that's exactly what Oatly has started to do. First in Europe, and now here in North America."

Oatly's website goes on to explain in easy-to-understand language how it calculates its carbon footprint labels, how the information is verified by a third party, and how it's pushing governments to require such labels on all food products.

02
Push Your Own Boundaries of Transparency

Consumers are justifiably skeptical about brands' claims on hot-button, values-related issues such as DE&I and sustainability as, increasingly, they have seen companies that make big announcements but then either fail to follow through or come up short on their goals. They are no longer willing to take a company's word that it is living up to the commitments made.

Fortunately, there is **an antidote to this consumer skepticism: transparency.** And the data backs this up: Survey respondents ranked transparency through data-backed actions and results as the most authentic way for brands to convey a positive reputation (76%). Customer testimonials and reviews, which are less difficult to fake, come in at 61%, followed by content that explains what the company is doing and why (52%). In last place are statements from company spokespersons, with employee testimonials and reviews at 37% and statements or commitments from the company's business leaders at 30%.

Reputation Builders

Viewed from another angle, 85% of consumers said that to convince them that a CEO will carry through with a values-led commitment — such as reducing their company's carbon footprint or supporting employee well-being and DE&I — the company would need to be transparent about its progress on these commitments.

But the stakes are getting higher. Consumers are increasingly less willing to forgive companies that are found to be underpaying staff, that miss goals regarding employee well-being, or that don't meet their commitments around DEI initiatives.

Better for a company to choose key areas that matter the most to their audiences — their employees, customers, shareholders — and take a bold step toward more transparency in those areas.

Companies that are willing to show their vulnerabilities and test their limits for sharing specific data, such as sustainability progress, employee compensation, AI and data policies, will build trust.

A little over 8 out of 10 respondents (81%) agree that brands can act to improve their reputation. The top three actions are: acknowledging and taking responsibility for past mistakes (64%), reviewing the root cause of an issue, and creating policies to reduce future risks (57%), and communicating the steps it will take to correct the issue (48%).

Overcoming consumer skepticism through transparency is not a complicated idea, but the level of disclosure needed to move the needle may bump up against entrenched values within organizations around controlling the flow of information. For myriad legal, ethical and competitive reasons, most companies won't fully disclose every detail of their operation.

Yet, as consumers grapple with the personal experience of global disruptions such as climate change and the rise of AI, they want to know what brands are really up to — and **they are ready to punish brands that don't meet their expectations of transparency.**

More companies are finding a way to thread that needle — finding ways to be responsibly transparent about specific areas of their business.

Reputation Fixers

Top Three Actions to Improve Poor Company Reputation

Image Credit: Codeword

Salary Transparency at Codeword

Codeword, a WE Communications company since 2019, says it has never shied away from "the money talk." The 100-person U.S.-based agency said it wanted to put a stake in the ground as workplace turbulence was setting in at the start of the COVID pandemic. In 2021, the agency drafted a Compensation Philosophy for all employees to see, along with Codeword's salary bands, which showed the pay tiers for different employee levels.

"With so much ambiguity in our lives and our industry, transparency felt like a powerful way to bring our team together," Alli Ray, Codeword's chief of staff, wrote in a blog post about the change.

"From the employee's view, they want to know their comp is intentional," she said. "That the company is stable, tracking industry pay trends, and willing to share the spoils with the team that makes success possible. From the employer's perspective, career stability can lead to team stability." It's a philosophy that's gaining steam — and proving a strong factor in corporate reputation.

"Being transparent about pay is a positive branding opportunity," said Lexi Clarke, vice president of people for Payscale, a company that specializes in managing pay transparency and a Codeword client. "It shows you value your employees and are equity-minded and forward-thinking, which is attractive to top talent."

In full transparency, WE Communications is still working through where greater levels of transparency can happen effectively, responsibly and consistently within the global agency.

Merger Details, for All to See

Pay isn't the only area where transparency can be effective.

When two of India's cinema titans, PVR and INOX, merged in March 2023, the risk was high that the Indian public would view the move with suspicion and skepticism due to concerns about job losses, competition, price hikes and cultural clashes.

To mitigate that potential, **company leaders took a highly transparent approach, elaborating on every detail of the merger,** including swap ratio, operations, approvals from regulators, financial numbers, market trends, the brand's business outlook and more.

The companies successfully turned the merger narrative around and positioned the combined entity as a gamechanger in the industry. The result was positive stories with strong headlines, such as "INOX-PVR merger to change the face of the entertainment industry," "Merger to deliver unparalleled movie-going experience" and "A gamechanger of a deal."

Image Credit: INOX

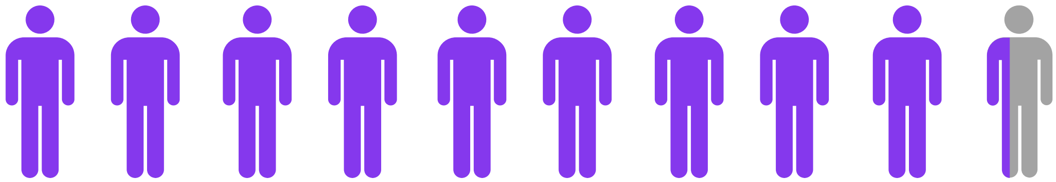
03

Employer Reputation = Corporate Reputation

For years, WE's Brands in Motion research has highlighted the link between brands' treatment of employees and their purpose narratives. This year's survey once again underscores the importance of employees to consumers' perceptions of brands, indicating that **consumers are looking at how corporations treat their employees** and buying — or not — accordingly.

In this year's survey, consumers have identified "respecting work-life balance" and "providing compensation that allows people to provide for themselves" among the top five corporate reputation factors. Yet brands still struggle to communicate effectively about their commitment to their employees. More than half (54%) of respondents say brands are not talking enough about employee compensation and benefits — the No. 2 response behind inflation and cost of living.

The Cost of Bad Behavior



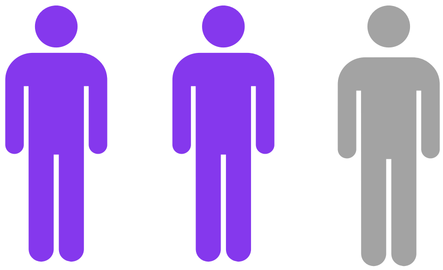
More than 9 in 10 employees (94%) say it matters to them if their employer is underpaying certain staff

Brands ignore this undercommunicated area at their peril, as it can have serious and direct impacts on consumer and employee behavior. More than 9 in 10 employees (94%) said that it matters to them if their employer is found to be underpaying certain staff, and 65% are unlikely to forgive a company for this. More than half of respondents (54%) said they would consider leaving a company if their employer is found to be underpaying certain staff. It's notable, though, that senior leaders (24%) are considerably more likely than employees (13%) to forgive this behavior.

More than half of respondents (54%) said they would consider leaving a company if their employer is found to be underpaying certain staff.

Brands can turn employee treatment into a reputation builder by proving that employees are a top priority. To accomplish this, 55% of respondents identified raising average employee compensation to meet or exceed living wage for their market as the best way to prove their commitment to employees. And brands mustn't shrink from their commitments when times are tough: 43% of respondents — the top response — would not forgive delaying commitments to employee wellbeing if an economic recession hits and a brand is forced to delay some of its commitments.

And having a strong employer brand builds pride and loyalty among employees too. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated that working for a company with a strong reputation increases pride and job satisfaction, provides a sense of security and stability (64%), and positively impacts employee morale and motivation (63%).



2/3 indicated that working for a company with a strong reputation:

- **Positively impacts employee morale and motivation**
- **Provides a sense of security and stability**
- **Increases pride and job satisfaction**

Employer branding has long been overlooked in favor of other elements of a brand's corporate reputation, but WE's Brands in Motion survey data reveals that it has become a core component of how brands are perceived. As consumers look more skeptically at brands' purpose commitments and activities, they are viewing the treatment of employees as a signal that it is also serious — or not — about taking care of other communities, such as customers.

Brands must consider the treatment of employees as a core component of their corporate reputation, reviewing HR practice for potential risk areas and high-lighting successes through proactive communications.

Success in this area can come in many ways.

Brands must consider the treatment of employees as a core component of their corporate reputation, reviewing HR practice for potential risk areas and highlighting successes through proactive communications.

Image Credit: DoorDash

DoorDash Pays ERG Leaders

For the food-delivery platform DoorDash, it was recognition of the time and work required to lead employee resource groups (ERGs). A way to foster a sense of belonging in the workplace for underrepresented groups, ERGs are now standard in workplaces around the world. But U.S. research has shown that at most, only about 6% of ERG leaders are compensated for their time.

DoorDash announced in 2022 that it would begin compensating the leaders of its eight official ERGs — Women, Pride, Parents, AAPI, Black, Unidos, Indigenous and Veterans — which include more than half of the company's employees.

Theresa Avila, lead recruiter for DoorDash, says the change led to a stronger program for connecting ERG members to job candidates — and better hiring results. **"In today's market, candidates are increasingly looking for a company with a good culture, a focus on DEI, and support for those in traditionally marginalized communities,"** she said.

"A call with an ERG member could make a huge difference in someone's decision to join DoorDash, and we've already seen early success with one candidate speaking with someone from our Women ERG, then signing their offer immediately after that conversation. We're very excited to see this program grow."

Image Credit: J.M. Smucker's

J.M. Smucker's "Core" Week Plan

Another success story emerged from the need to bring employees back to a sprawling company headquarters in rural Ohio, U.S., after the COVID pandemic eased.

The leaders of J.M. Smucker's, the 125-year-old jelly-maker that has grown into an $8.5 billion consumer food business with about 6,000 global employees, debated for months over a return-to-office strategy for its 1,300 Ohio-based corporate workers.

They landed on a unique arrangement that requires workers to be on site about 25% of their work time. The plan is built around 22 "core" weeks each year, determined by management. The result: The office is about 70% full on any given core week, bringing the kind of engagement and hallway interaction that sparks new ideas and productivity. And employees appreciate the flexibility.

And, as we see with other companies that care for their employees, the change in workplace expectations has been an asset to the hiring process. Candidates for high-level jobs who don't want to relocate to northeastern Ohio have found the core weeks requirement a good compromise and way to manage a work-life balance.

"We're not limited by geography," said John Nichols, a Smucker's vice president. "It's unleashed, I think, the ability to get the best talent."

04

Companies Can't Opt Out of AI

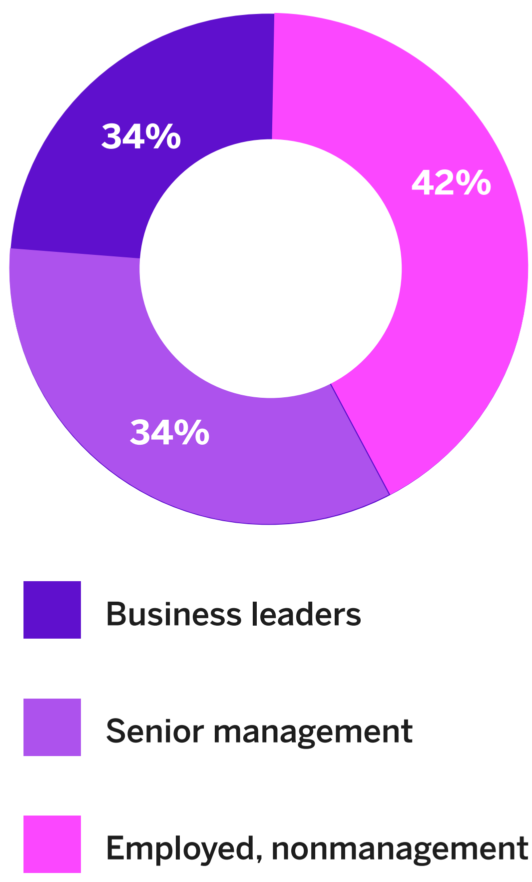
Brands need to get real on artificial intelligence — how it will affect their employees, policies for working with it and more. The **use of artificial intelligence is accelerating in every category,** and brands need to confront that reality now, even if they don't have all the answers.

AI — and now especially the impact of generative AI — is rising to the top of the list of issues that shape corporate reputation. Survey respondents overwhelmingly (64%) said that the responsible use of technology — including AI and customer data — will become a more crucial factor in reputation over the next two to three years.

People are mixed on whether they believe brands are talking enough about AI, perhaps because it's still new. More than a third of respondents said brands should talk more about AI, and about half said AI is being discussed at just the right amount.

A disconnect emerges when the questions around AI get personal. Job loss is a real concern — 42% of employees say it's important for companies to minimize AI's impact on job displacement. Yet only 34% of business leaders agree.

Addressing Fear of Job Displacement



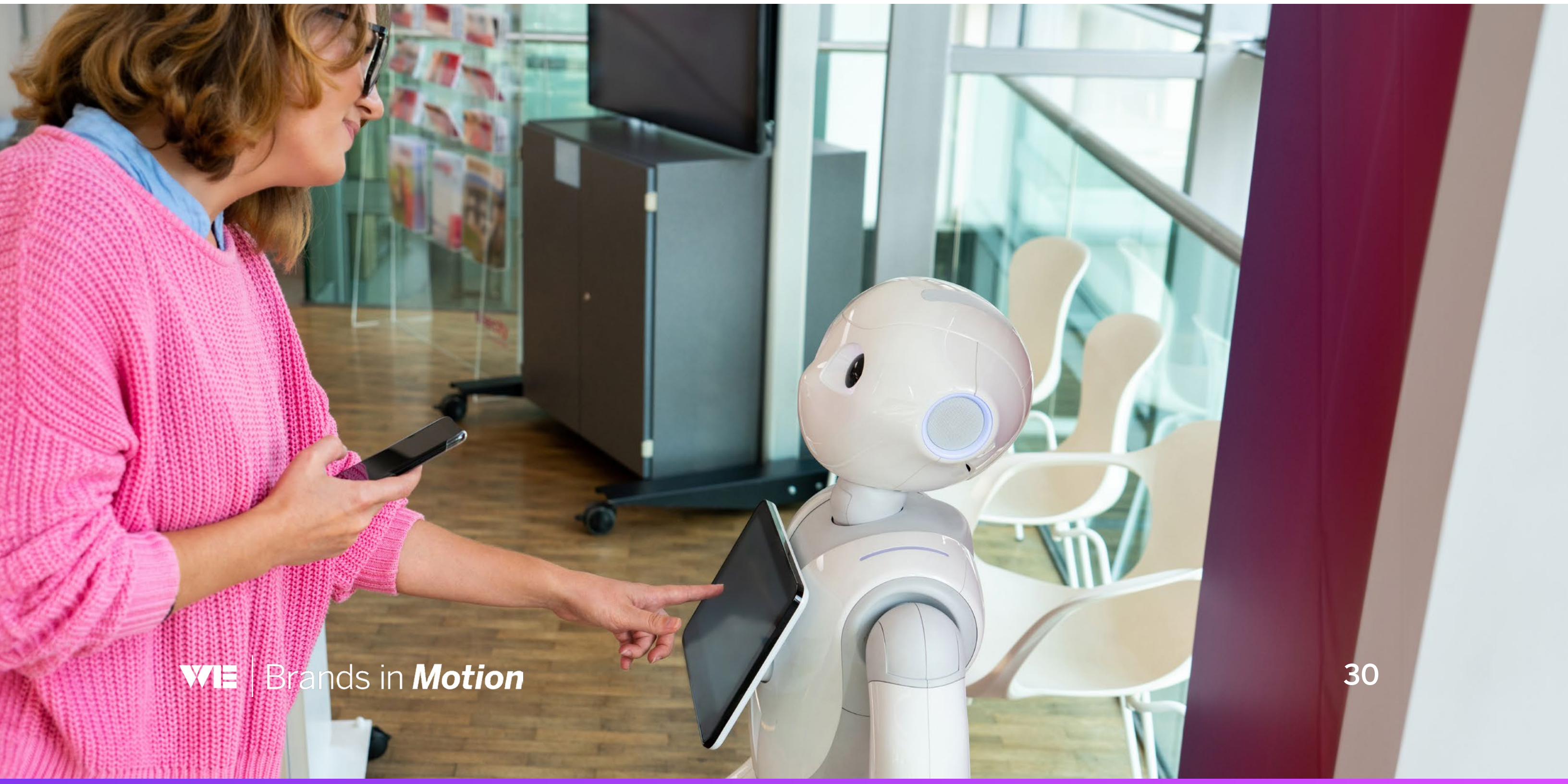
How companies incorporate AI into their workplaces and talk about it with employees is the key.

More than a third (39%) of respondents said that transparency in the use of technology systems in the workplace is an important aspect for companies to focus on when developing or using AI or other emerging technologies.

Some industries are already shifting their thinking on AI, moving past fear or reluctant experimentation toward finding ways AI can enhance their quality and output. **Brands must approach AI as a core part of their overall business** narrative and be open and transparent with employees, customers and other stakeholders about their use of new technology. Laggards will see business consequences.

Consider today the rapid changes in manufacturing. Breakdowns in supply chain management in recent years demonstrated just how much the global economy depends on a reliable flow of goods. AI is proving to be an effective partner in the process. In an interview in September, the head of the international Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, Mark Baxa, pointed to the growing use of AI chatbots to negotiate with vendors — an advantage because of AI's ability to pull data quickly and formulate risk profiles of suppliers.

"Supply chain executives of the future will need to think differently," he said. "They'll need to have different skill sets. And they will need to think more strategically, using a higher degree of automation and artificial intelligence, to

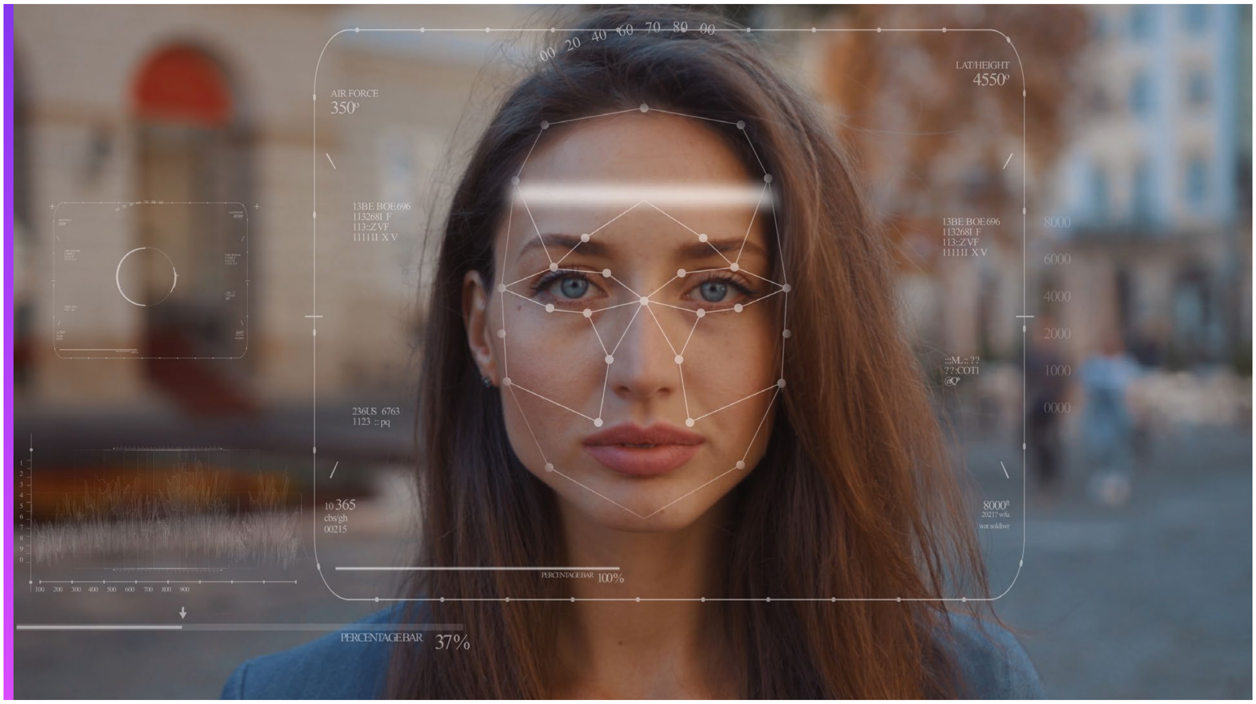


produce solutions that help supply chains deliver the result."

He cautioned: "There's going to be some real challenges for those that resist the use of artificial intelligence."

In the education sector, initial fears of cheating students asking ChatGPT to write their essays has given way to teachers and schools around the world exploring new and creative ways for AI to enhance education. In September, UNESCO published a 48-page "Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research," a human-centered exploration of how AI can affect learning.

The UNESCO report doesn't shy away from the challenges AI presents to education — from unchartered ethical issues, such as psychological impact and hidden biases, to legal questions around copyright and intellectual property. But it also highlights the nascent field of EdGPT, models trained with specific data to serve educational purposes. And it presents detailed frameworks for how AI could be used in a wide range of situations — from teaching coding and arithmetic to supporting special-needs learners and co-designing courses or curriculums with teachers.



Indeed, most industries will benefit from integrating generative AI as a collaborator and talking openly with employees and consumers about their innovations.

As WE counselled in [“Fascinated and Frightened,”] an early-2023 survey of communications professionals about generative AI, “We need to expand our view of AI beyond efficiency and consider the ways this technology can help communicators be more strategic and creative. We need to understand deeply how AI technology works so that we can lead the way in the fight against misinformation. And we need to dream big as AI developments unlock new use cases for our industry.”

So, what should brand communicators do now? **Rapid AI experimentation is essential,** paired with both thoughtful, careful adoption and transparent communication.

Companies know AI is here to stay — 80% of the communications professionals we surveyed said AI will be “extremely or very important” to the future of PR work. How some of the biggest players in the AI space are innovating now can lay a path for companies just starting to engage with AI.

Image Credit: Adobe

Adobe Champions Authenticity

Digital experience pioneer Adobe has taken a unique approach by leading responsible AI development. Understanding that increasingly powerful AI tools could create societal challenges, Adobe, along with industry partners, launched the Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI), rallying creators, technologists, journalists, non-profits and activists in a unified movement to address and prevent digital misinformation.

Working together, the world's biggest content developers and publishers are collaborating to promote the adoption of an open-industry standard for content authenticity and transparency, mitigate against deepfakes, and create an end-to-end open technical standard. Over 1,500 members have joined the CAI in just a few years, including major media and technology companies such as the BBC, The New York Times, AP, Reuters, Microsoft, Nikon, and Canon.

The CAI's global standards body, the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity, is working to drive adoption of Content Credentials — a "digital nutrition label" including information such as the creator's name, the date an image was created, the tools used to create the image, and any edits that were made. This new tamper-evident metadata captures what tools were used, showing when something was created with AI, or proving when something was human-created. Adobe is incorporating Content Credentials into its own tools, including its creator-centric generative AI Firefly, which automatically attaches Content Credentials to inform viewers how each piece of content was made.

Across all of Adobe's clouds — Creative Cloud, Document Cloud and Experience Cloud — the company is embracing AI as a co-pilot that amplifies human ingenuity, steeped in responsible AI development practices. AI Ethics is one of the core pillars of Adobe's commitment to responsible digital citizenship, part of the company's pledge to address the consequences of technology innovation. Adobe's AI Ethics principles include responsibility, accountability and transparency.

In a recent statement, Adobe has said that its **efforts to fight misinformation and responsibly develop AI shows "the potential new ideas have when we focus together on technology, community and open source to increase trust and transparency."**

Image Credit: Adobe

Closing Thoughts

WE Communications' 2023 Brands in Motion research shows we're in a world where the need for stability has never felt more personal.

"Will climate change threaten my home?" "How much will inflation squeeze my family budget?" "Will AI make my job redundant?" These are no longer issues for future generations to tackle. They are real today.

People around the globe are anxious, and they are looking to the brands they love to help ease their stress, to show what they're doing now to keep their customers — and the planet — safe, healthy and secure. Brands that take a bolder approach to communicating their progress and impact in the areas that matter most to consumers are gaining respect and loyalty for their actions.

Knowing how to focus, and how to communicate authentically in this era of media swirl and heightened consumer skepticism, can be overwhelming. WE's research points to a fresh set of communications rules that will carry brands forward:

- **Prioritize the Personal**
- **Push Your Own Boundaries of Transparency**
- **Employer Reputation = Corporate Reputation**
- **Companies Can't Opt Out of AI**

The future of communications is about taking smart, time-tested practices and adapting them for a world where the public's demands are intensifying. We are facing new challenges around the globe every single day. Successful brands are strengthening their corporate reputations by deepening their connections with their audiences and recognizing that for consumers now: It's personal.

Appendix

Survey Methodology

The WE Brands in Motion report is a worldwide study of how perceptions shift over time, conducted by WE and YouGov. Now in its seventh year, Brands in Motion has surveyed 114,000+ consumers and business decision-makers about their attitudes regarding:

- Expectations for brand actions and investments
- Forces affecting the market on a macro level
- Expectations for purpose initiatives

YouGov conducted the Brands in Motion online quantitative study between June 27 and July 6, 2023, surveying 14,801 general consumers in seven markets:

- Australia: 2,047
- Germany: 2,151
- India: 2,079
- Singapore: 2,030
- South Africa: 2,074
- United Kingdom: 2,138
- United States: 2,282

All participants interviewed in 2023 were screened as general consumers, but information was collected to allow us to dig deeper into employment status and level of management.
Employed full or part time: 10,402
Business leader*: 1,314
Senior manager**: 1,008

**Business leader is defined as C-level executives (CEO, COO, CFO, President, Chairman, etc.) or executive management (executive vice president, senior vice president, etc.).*

***Senior manager is defined as senior management (director, senior director, vice president, etc.).*

Your Brand Is in Motion

Our world is constantly changing. Brands in Motion provides the data-driven tools that enable brands to respond to disruptions and build an enduring legacy. To learn more about Brands in Motion or find out about Brands in Motion events in your area, contact: BrandsinMotion@we-worldwide.com.

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your brand
and your stories are in motion.

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