

2024

# Social In The C-Suite

Exploring How Senior Leaders Are Using  
Digital Media To Manage Reputation,  
Address Social Issues And Connect  
Directly With Key Stakeholders

# Digital media is an essential tool in building an executive communications strategy

In this year's *Social in The C-Suite Report*, we explored how executives are evolving their use of digital channels to build their reputation, speak on social issues and share business updates with key stakeholders.

While CEOs remain the focus, we also explored how others in the C-suite are adding their voices to the conversation on social, highlighted by a class of CFOs who are regularly sharing content online.

## Reputation Building

**Executives are bolstering their reputation through use of digital media**

## Critical Issues

**CEOs are carefully using their voice on digital media to speak on critical issues**

## Stakeholder Engagement

**Key stakeholders are online and engaging with executive-led digital content**

# Executives are bolstering their reputation through use of social media

More executives than ever are claiming their online identity and leveraging their profiles to communicate more effectively to build a positive public reputation.



# Social media remains a critical communications tool for executives

68% of CEOs have a social media account, a year-over-year increase of nearly 3%, proving that social media channels are a priority within the C-suite.

## Executive Presence on Social Media Remains Steady

7 of 10

CEOs have at least one social media account

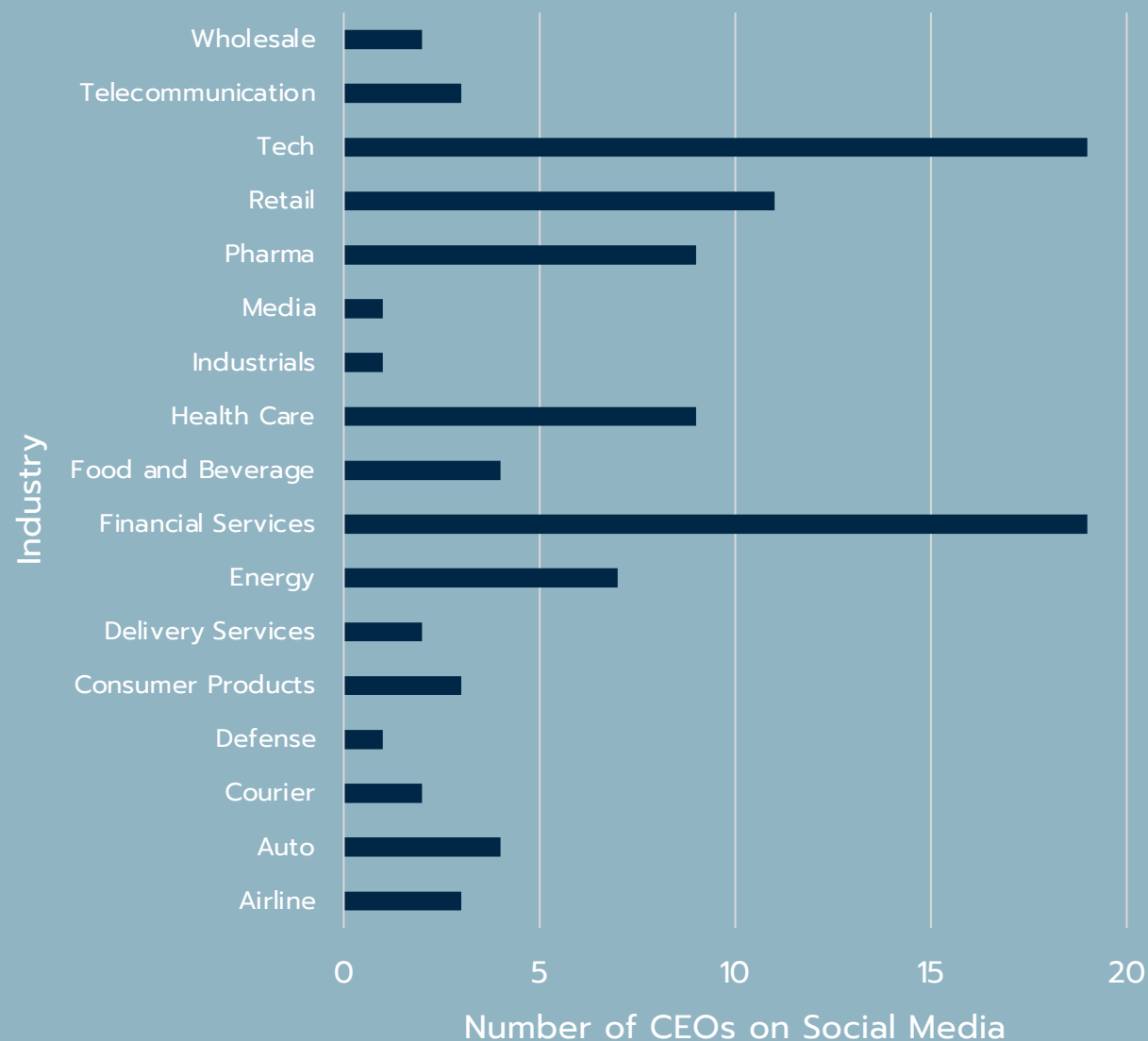
48%

Of CEOs post on social media at least once per month

# Tech and Financial Services CEOs are the most present on social media

CEOs in the tech space have increased their social media participation significantly, doubling the number of accounts year-over-year (+111%) and overtaking healthcare CEOs as the second most active leaders on social. The surge was due to the sector's focus on X accounts, which netted 57% of their claimed accounts – the lone industry segment to increase year-over-year presence on the platform.

Financial services leaders maintained a strong presence on social thanks, in part, to 53% of their CEOs being on LinkedIn, among the highest across industries.



# LinkedIn remains the most used social media channel among leaders

LinkedIn continues to be the social media channel of choice for CEOs, as use of the platform is up 4% since 2022.

The average post cadence on LinkedIn remains at twice per month, with top five performers averaging 5x as much as the average executive.

## LinkedIn By the Numbers

68% <sup>+4%</sup>  
Of CEOs are on LinkedIn

48% <sup>+60%</sup>  
Of CEOs post at least once-per-month

4M <sup>+20%</sup>  
New CEO followers on LinkedIn

# C-suite decreased its presence and engagement on X\*

Since rebranding as X in 2023, the platform formerly known as Twitter has seen a significant downturn in executive use among CEOs, who posted more than 33,000 fewer tweets than they had in 2022.

Similarly, the platform was home to several dormant profiles, featuring CEOs with profiles that did not post – a total that increased by 75% since 2022.

Total following among executives shrank by 17%, signaling a possible audience migration to other social platforms like LinkedIn, where executives have proven to be more present and engaged.

\*Formerly Twitter

## X losing traction among executives

-14X

CEOs are posting less than in 2022

26% +14%

Of CEOs claimed X profile without tweeting

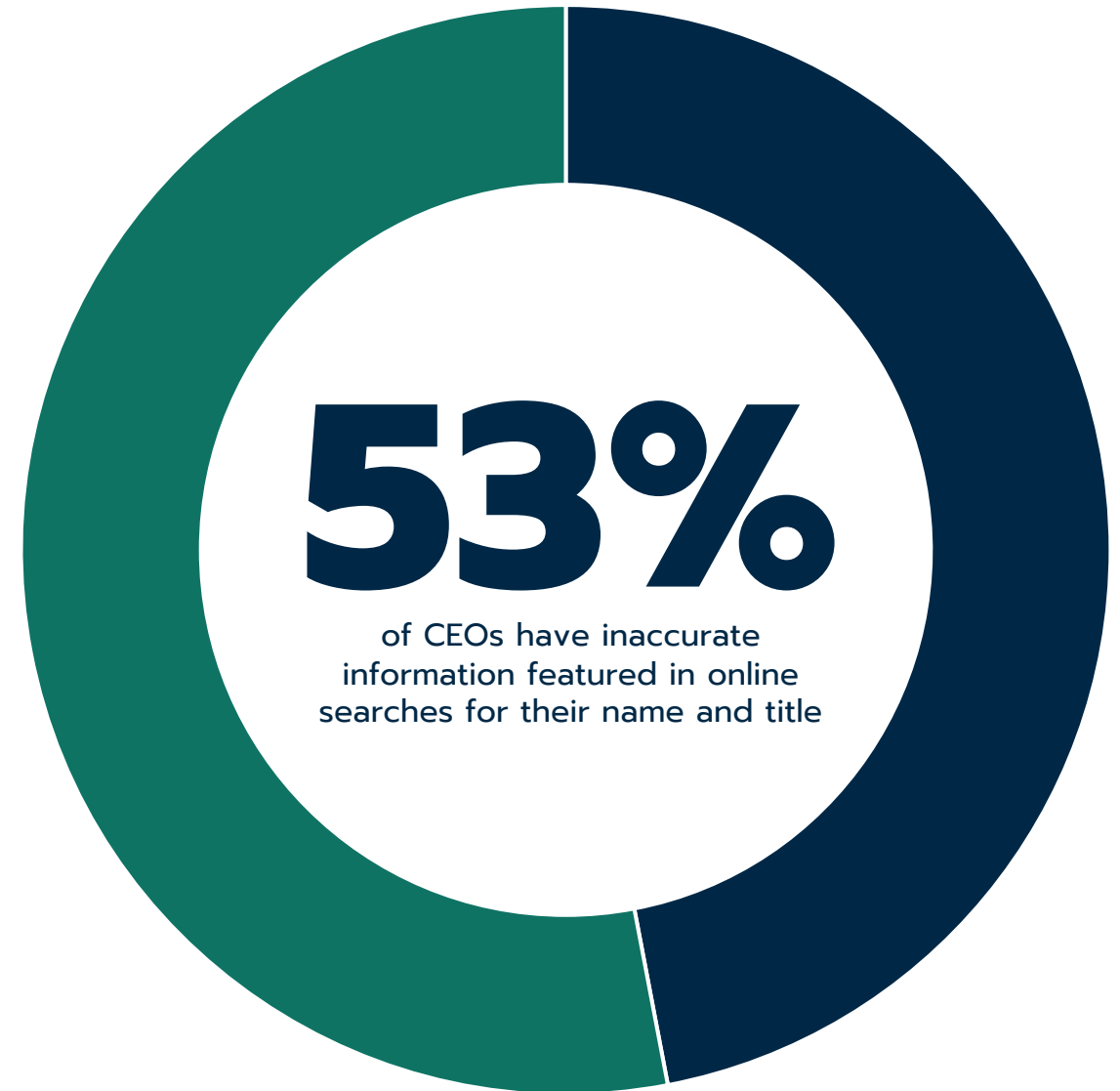
6 -69%

Average X posts-per-month among CEOs

# CEOs not on social media run the risk of having an inaccurate online profile

For CEOs not on social media, they run the risk of compromising their full digital profile, as more than half of all CEOs who are not on social media also have inaccuracies in their online search profile – from errant Wikipedia entries, inaccurate bios and invalid social media accounts attached to their names.

Despite the risk of having an inaccurate online profile, 43% of Fortune 100 CEOs still lack an accurate and claimed Google Knowledge Panel.



# CFOs joining CEOs across social media channels

CEOs no longer need to shoulder all the weight of executive engagement on social media as a significant cohort of CFOs are active on social media.

89%

Of CFOs have a LinkedIn account and post at least once-per-month

50K

Average followers-per-account

15x

CFOs have a higher engagement rate than CEOs

1x

Post-per-month

# A decline in social media activity among CEOs spurs a decline in engagement

Even though more CEOs have claimed their presence online, there has been a precipitous decline in activity across channels.

CEOs shared 189% less posts year-over-year between 2022 and 2023, and subsequently saw a drop in engagement of 40% in that same timeframe.

There was lift in X engagement (up 203% year-over-year), but the post count is down significantly, with CEOs sharing over 20,000 fewer posts than 2022.

## Less content = less engagement

-1.2k

Fewer posts on LinkedIn

-40%

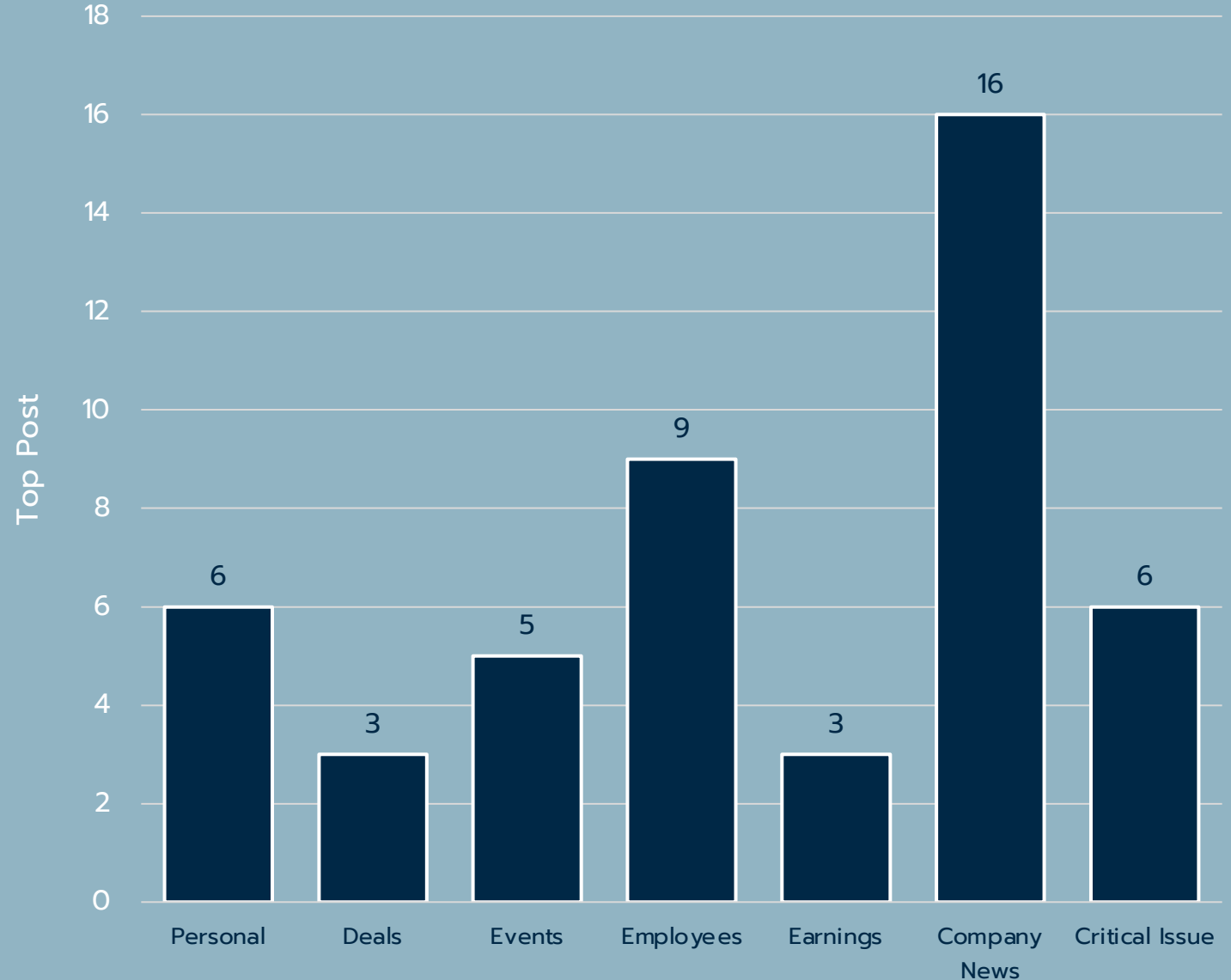
Decrease in likes, shares and  
comments on LinkedIn

-20k

Fewer posts on X

# Company news earns the highest engagement among CEOs

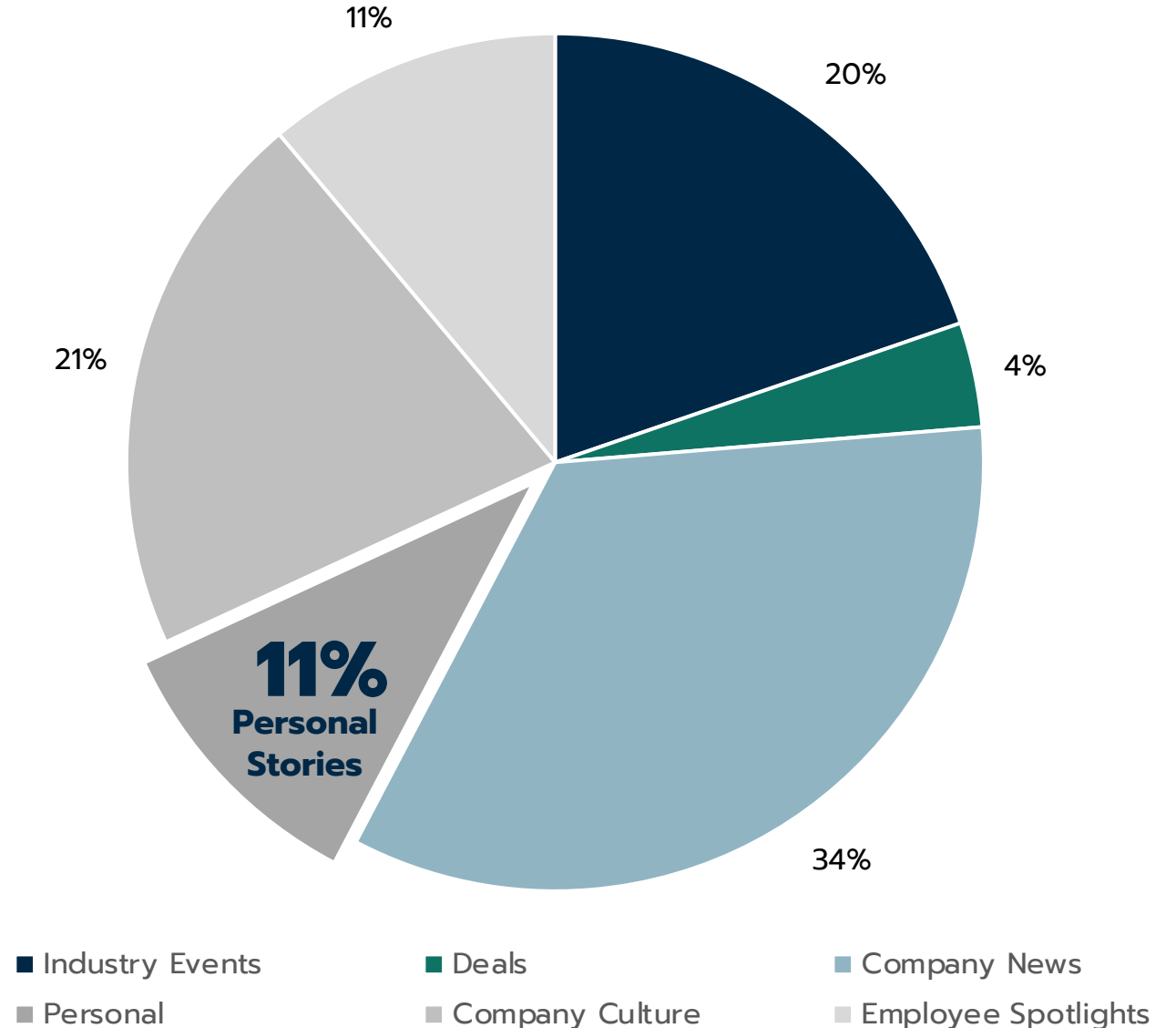
32% of the top posts among executives were related to a company announcement, including topics like leadership transitions, product changes or philanthropic endeavors.

















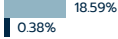



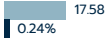





















# CEOs are using more personal anecdotes in their social media content

While company news remains the most popular topic among CEOs, personal anecdotes are increasing in volume and relevance.

Since 2022, posts with a personal story increased by 6 percentage points, largest across all topic areas.



# Among executives active on social, these CEOs have been named *Most Influential* based on audience engagement, reach and affinity

Name	Company	Affinity	Reach	Social Media
 Elon Musk			179.77M	
 Bill Gates			64.50M	
 Tim Cook			14.57M	
 Sundar Pichai			5.40M	
 Satya Nadella			3.25M	
 Michael Dell			693.9K	
 Mark Zuckerberg			756.3K	
 Robert Iger			345.7K	
 Jim Farley			255.4K	
 Aaron Levie			2.49M	

# Automotive leaders winning with multi-platform approach

General Motors CEO Mary Barra and Ford CEO Jim Farley have firmly solidified themselves as digital mavens, as they stretch across social media, digital newsletters and podcasts.



CEO Spotlight:

## Mary Barra

The General Motors CEO is among the few to have accounts on multiple channels, plus manages a monthly LinkedIn newsletter, *"Driving Towards What Matters."*

#2

Highest Engagement Rate on Twitter

#5

Most Followed CEO on LinkedIn



LinkedIn Newsletter



LinkedIn top Voices



CEO Spotlight:

## Jim Farley

The Ford CEO is among the most prolific authors on social media, ranking in the top five across LinkedIn and X in post cadence for the second year in a row. He also hosts a podcast titled *"DRIVE with Jim Farley."*

#1

Tied for most post on LinkedIn

#5

Most posts on X



Launched owned podcast



LinkedIn top Voices

Our Advice to CEOs:

# Digital profile building should be part your executive communications strategy

For C-suite leaders, success on digital platforms has become increasingly important in building and maintaining reputation.

- ✚ Be inspired by peers leading the way on digital, but also keep in mind how your voice on digital channels will advance your company's business and communications goals.
- ✚ Consider a data-led approach that informs what channels to join, what to post and how often.
- ✚ Take control of your online reputation by claiming and maintaining your digital profile. Even without a proactive digital strategy, online profile safety starts with a verified digital media profile.

# CEOs are carefully using their voice on social media to speak on critical issues

As shifts in business and society become more rapid, leaders are exploring how communicating online can impact personal and corporate reputation.



# Most CEOs remain cautious when using digital media to address sensitive issues

Nearly 8 out of 10 CEOs opted to remain quiet on social media regarding sensitive issues, instead withholding comments or speaking directly to stakeholders offline. Even leaders who earned LinkedIn's Top Voices badge were reticent to jump into the social media fray during a heated news cycle.

However, those who did comment saw those posts rise among their most popular, as noted that 1 in 10 of the top posts from CEOs were related to a critical issue.

## Carefully addressing the issues

20%

Of CEOs on social media spoke on critical issues

20%

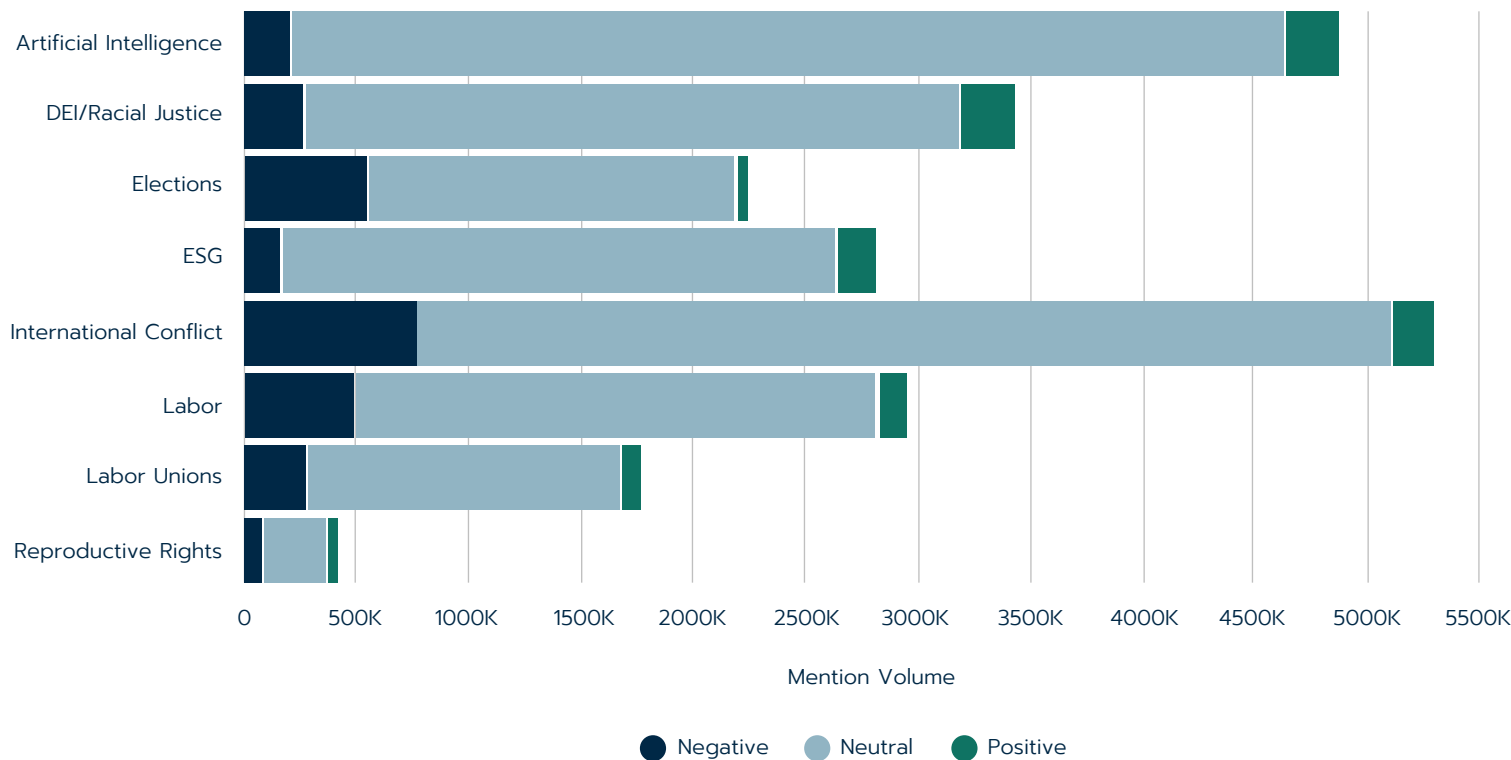
Of CEOs names at LinkedIn Top Voices spoke on critical issues

10%

Of CEOs top performing posts were related to addressing a critical issue

# CEO statements on international conflicts were the most polarizing when shared online

International conflicts in Ukraine and Israel sparked the most sentiment among users responding to executive statements made online.



Albert Bourla  
@AlbertBourla

In March of 1943, the Nazis started deporting the Jews of my home city of Thessaloniki to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Approximately 95% of this thriving Jewish community, that marked the life of this city for centuries, were exterminated. It is long overdue but Thessaloniki's Holocaust Museum, recognizing this tragedy, is finally becoming a reality. I personally feel the importance of this deeply, especially with rising antisemitism around the world. This museum will serve as an important reminder of what happened to families—including mine—in Greece and across Europe during the Holocaust. [ekathimerini.com/culture/122769...](https://ekathimerini.com/culture/122769...)

7:12 AM · Dec 22, 2023 · 21.9K Views



Satya Nadella  
@satyanadella

Heartbroken by the horrific terrorist attacks on Israel and the escalating conflict. My deepest condolences are with all those killed and impacted. Our focus remains on ensuring the safety of our employees and their families. Below is a message we shared with Microsoft employees today about our response. [blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2023/10/1...](https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2023/10/1...)

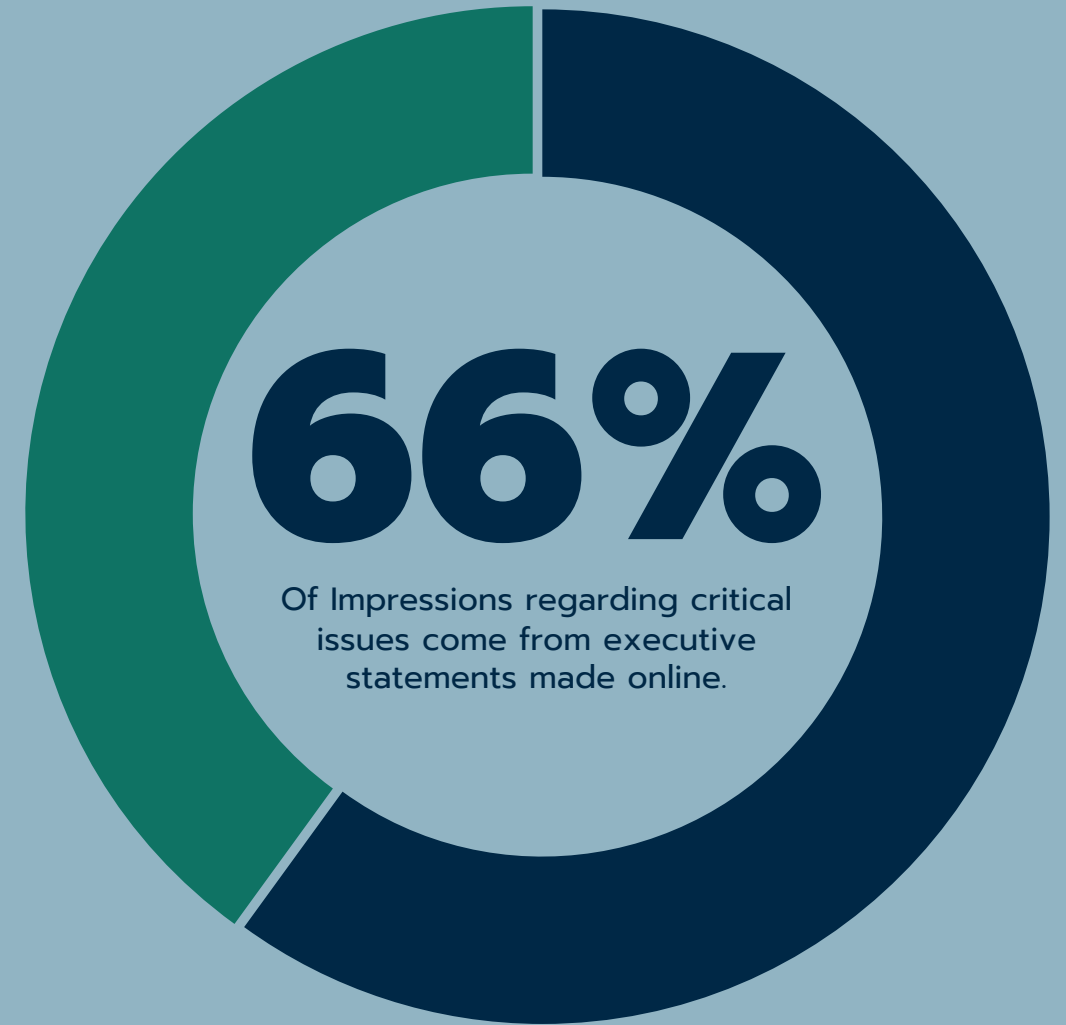
12:40 AM · Oct 11, 2023 · 631.1K Views

*Two of the most shared posts from CEOs were related to comments made about the Israel-Palestine conflict, leading to the second lowest sentiment rating across sensitive topics (-16%)\*.*

# Executive statements shared online will earn more reach than those made in traditional news

Since 2020, 20% of CEOs shared a formal statement on their social media accounts regarding critical global issues, with those statements often making their way from social media to traditional news outlets and online searches related to the topic.

In fact, statements made online by executives on critical issues reach 53% more people than those offered just in traditional news sources.



# Financial communications remain a key part of CEO narratives on social media

Financial communications is a blossoming area of interest among socially active CEOs, as more than half of all active CEOs posted at least once about company performance.

Top performers on social were particularly focused on earnings, as 58% of LinkedIn top voices used the platform to share earnings materials.

57% of CEOs active on social media used the platform to discuss mergers, acquisitions or partnerships.

## Communicating During Earnings

41%

Of CEOs posted on earnings results on social media

# Executive transitions remain an area of opportunity on social media

Newly appointed CEOs are missing an opportunity to hit the ground running on social media, as just 1 in 6 CEOs increased their activity after assuming their new role as CEO.

Of the newly appointed CEOs in 2023 among Fortune 100 companies only Jason Hollar of Cardinal Health increased his post cadence, earning him an 8.2% engagement rate – more than 1.5 times higher than his peer set.

Additionally, new leaders failed to use a new position as a launch point for new communications, as more than half did not have a social profile upon appointment.

30% of the newly appointed CEOs decreased their social media activity despite having a social media profile prior to becoming CEO.

## Making the Social Handoff

3.3%

New CEOs can earn more engagement than their previous CEO

50%

New CEOs did not have a social media profile when taking over as CEO

Our Advice to CEOs:

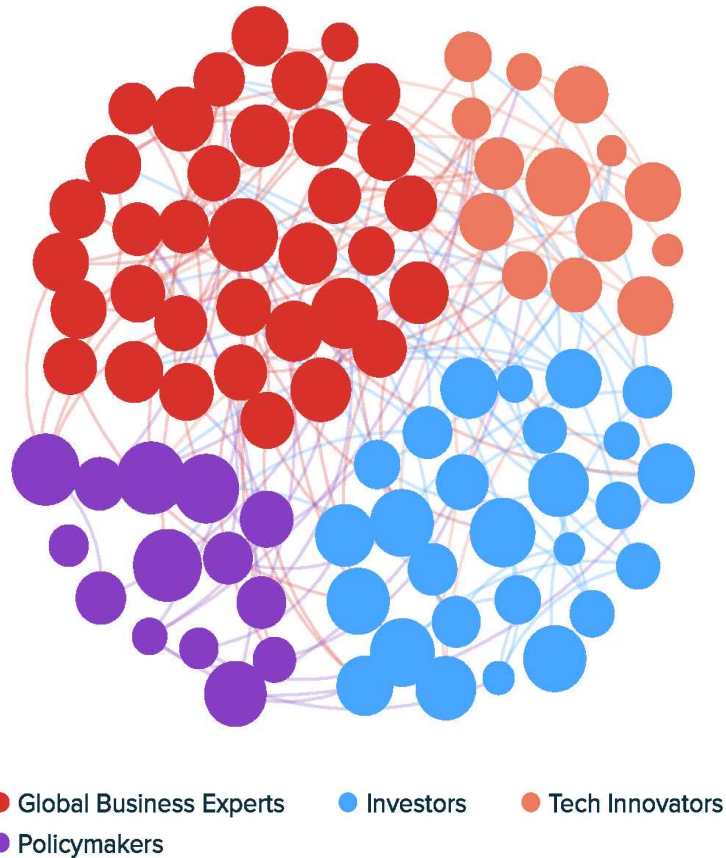
# Be thoughtful when using online platforms to address critical issues

- + Choose which social issues to address judiciously, as they are likely to be hot button issues that drive conversation online – both positive and negative
- + Use social wisely in critical moments, as it can have a sustained impact on executive and corporate reputation
- + Build a cadence around moments like earnings, where stakeholders can expect to see and hear from leadership regularly
- + New leaders should not miss an opportunity to create an online footprint in the early days on their appointment

# Key stakeholders are online and engaging with executive-led digital content

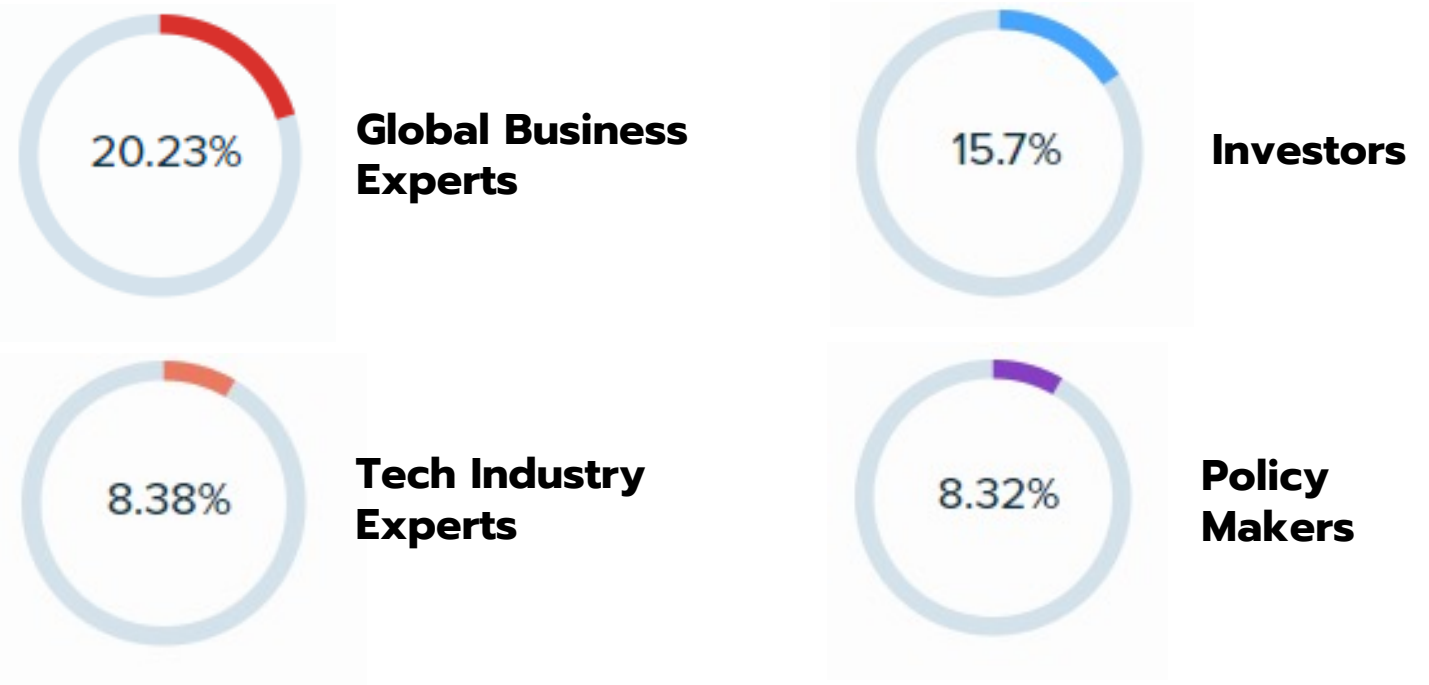
Executives engaged online can leverage social media channels to cut past the noise and communicate directly with their most important stakeholders

# Key stakeholders are active on social media and following CEOs across channels



Three of the largest audiences following CEOs online – global business experts, investors and policy makers - are likely critical to the company's communications strategy, validating executive communication and presence across social media.

The high number of tech industry experts is likely attributable to a new wave of active and engaged tech CEOs on X.\* Employee profiles are slightly less identifiable within social clusters but remain topically relevant (see slide 31).



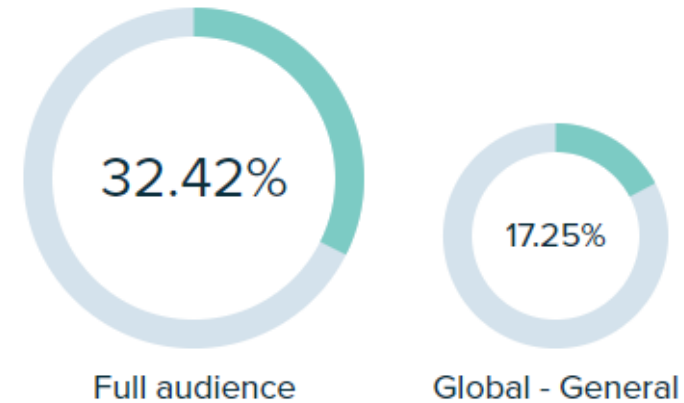
\*See Slide 5 for details on Tech Industry following

# Executives should use paid media to target their message directly to key audiences

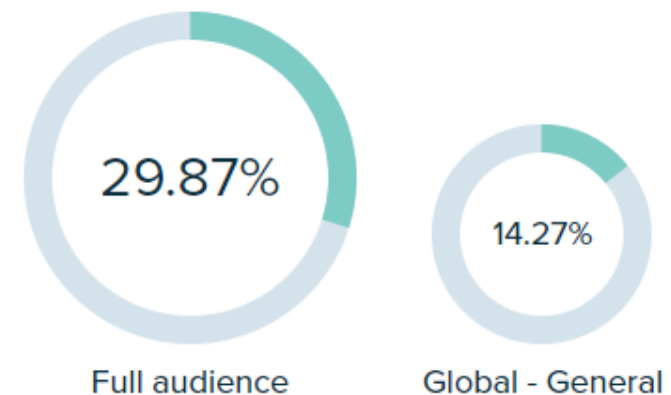
Online audiences following C-suite executives are welcoming to targeted and sustained campaigns online, making a paid media strategy a smart, strategic step towards earning engagement and reach online.

Social media has become a mobile-first experience, making short, punchy, visual-friendly posts an imperative to communicating with C-suite interested audiences online

## Stakeholders following CEOs are more likely to respond to targeted ads



## Stakeholders following CEOs are more likely to respond to sustained campaigns



# CEOs who post on social media during the 'Magic Hour' have a better chance at earning engagement

Online audiences following C-suite executives are most engaged with content during the middle of the week, during the afternoon.

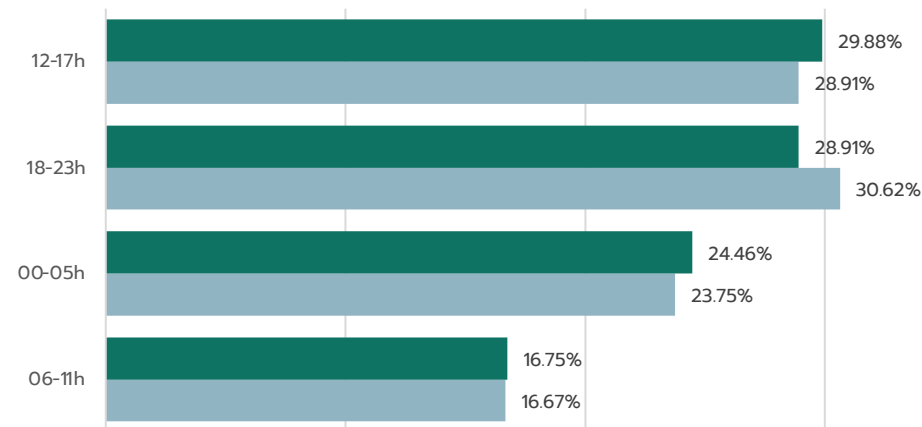


WEDNESDAY

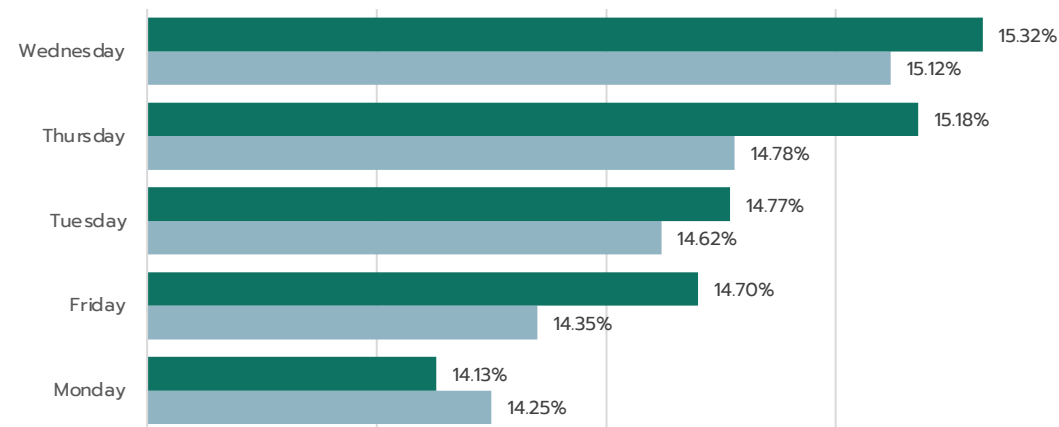


12p – 7p

Active Hours



Active Hours



# Traditional media remains an important means for executives to connect with stakeholders also using social media

Stakeholders following executives on social media are still heavy consumers of traditional news media, making it an important part of a stakeholder outreach strategy for CEOs on social media.

The most popular outlets among people following CEOs are:

Broadcast:



21.4%

Radio:



18%

Newspaper:



24.1%

Magazine:



16%

The graph shows the relevance of traditional media based on their shared affinity among CEOs on social media. Courtesy: Audiense. Affinity measured based on followers from 29 public social media accounts from Fortune 100 CEOs

# CEOs are finding success connecting with employees using digital media

Employees are always a critical audience for CEOs, and best in class leaders have used this to draw positive engagement online.

Posts where CEOs highlighted employee accomplishments, leadership changes or employee-led philanthropy were 3x more likely to exceed engagement benchmarks on social media than any other topic.

## Engaging with employees on social media

15%

of top LinkedIn posts were related to employee spotlights, second highest among top-performing posts

Our Advice to CEOs:

# CEOs can find their most important audiences online and ready for leaders to engage across digital platforms

Executives can be confident that the audiences they hope to reach - from investors to employees - are active online

- + Build an audience-specific content strategy that meets engaged stakeholders where they are online
- + Leverage channel insights to determine what to post, when to post and how to measure resonance
- + Create stories that can live on digital media, but remain newsworthy across traditional news channels



Contact:

**Akeem Anderson**

Akeem.Anderson@h-advisors.global

H/Advisors Abernathy conducted a comprehensive analysis of the Fortune 100 CEOs' and CFOs' social media accounts\* to better understand their content, channel management and engagement strategies.

More than 5,000 posts were analyzed across social channels, with particular focus on content published from January 1 to December 30, 2023 on LinkedIn and Twitter.

The content yielded more than 1,500 data points for analysis quantified by:

- **Cadence:** What is the frequency of their social media activity?
- **Followers:** What is the extent of their audience size and reach?
- **Engagement:** To what degree does their content resonate with their key audience?
- **Optimization:** Are they utilizing best practices and optimal strategies for each respective platform?
- **Sentiment:** Was public response to content negative, neutral or positive?
- **Profile optimization:** Were social profiles recent, accurate, discoverable and complete?
- **Content strategy:** What themes showed up consistently in editorial strategy?

In order to preserve data integrity, H/Advisors Abernathy deliberately excluded content shared during Elon Musk's Twitter acquisition. Likewise, related posts authored by Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and Twitter, were excluded from the study in areas where those were deemed either inconsequential for the purpose of this analysis, an outlier relative the analysis. All other posts made by the CEOs of Fortune 100 companies were considered in the analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of their social media strategies.