

Social in the C-suite

How CEOs are meeting the
mandate to connect with
their stakeholders online.

CEOs are transforming their communications strategies to keep pace with digital platform evolution.

Since H/Advisors Abernathy began publishing the Social in the C-suite report, CEOs have increasingly prioritized their digital presence, showing steady growth in social media activity, visibility and audience engagement and size.

But as digital platforms have evolved, more has not necessarily meant better for senior leaders building their online profile.

Today's algorithms reward content quality and relevance to targeted audiences over post volume and audience size.

Because these platform changes can happen at a frenetic, yet stealth pace, CEOs and their communications teams must ask strategic questions such as:

- “Which platforms should I prioritize?”
- “Should I weigh in on this issue on my social media channels?”
- “How will my message reach the right stakeholders in the crowded online space?”

Simply being a prominent public figure is no longer enough to break through the crowded digital ecosystem. For senior leaders, success on digital channels demands a refined strategy, consistent presence and a distinctive point of view.

Our latest report answers these questions and more, offering guidance to help C-suite leaders build and protect their reputation.

Key takeaways for CEOs

Protect reputation before a critical moment strikes.

32% more CEOs have updated their online profile since 2024 -- helping to protect their reputation prepare for major announcements or address important issues facing their company and the industry.

Focus on quality over quantity to maximize stakeholder engagement.

Engagement on CEOs' social media content has increased by 19% as leaders carefully choose how, why and when they post online, bringing more meaning and impact to each piece of content.

Use online channels to shape public engagement on critical issues.

CEOs who earned the LinkedIn Top Voices badge remain highly active in addressing critical issues, posting 26% more than in the previous year. This increase underscores the value of unique thought leadership among executives and demonstrates that the effort pays off.

CEOs are focused on proactively strengthening their digital presence.

Leaders are no longer waiting for a crisis or market announcement before managing their online profiles, ensuring their online profile is accurate, relevant and reflective of their views.

67%

Of CEOs have claimed a social media profile

Online profile optimization improves among CEOs

This year, the number of CEOs with fully updated digital profiles across platforms like LinkedIn and other social media rose by 32%, reaching its highest level in the past three years.

Protecting reputation with profile updates

74%

Of CEOs on social media post once a month.

+32%
from 2024

26%

Of CEOs still have incorrect information that shows up in their Google Knowledge Panel.

-103%
from 2024

Optimization checklist

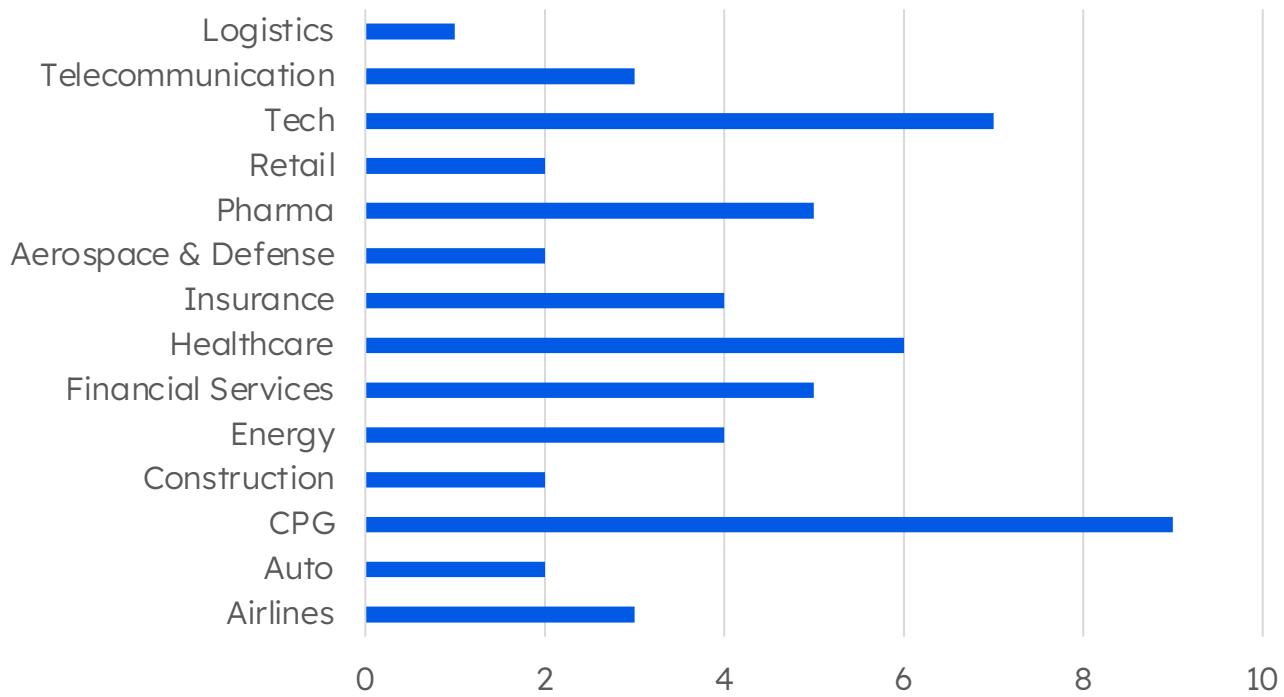
- A link to company social media channels or website with full name and current title.
- Updated biography with brief professional history included.
- Recent profile picture and branded banner on social media profile.
- Verified profile badge on social media channels.

Our take

While CEOs are making progress in managing their online profiles, many leaders still lack owned and regularly updated digital presences, leaving them exposed to misinformation campaigns and public misidentification. We recommend taking proactive steps to strengthen executive profiles before a crisis, major announcement, or malicious actor creates a reputational threat.

CEOs across industries have increased their presence on social media

Every Fortune 100 industry segment has at least one CEO represented on social media.



Increasing number of CEOs active on social media

71%

+32%
from 2024

Of CEOs on social media post once a month.

78%

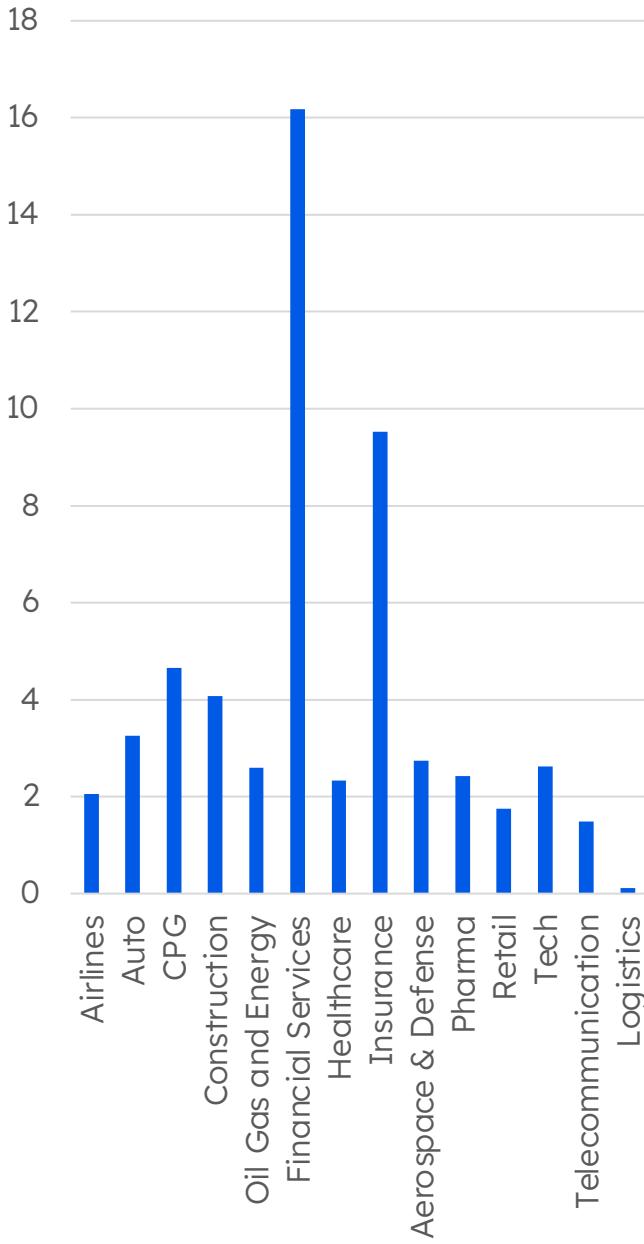
Of CEOs have at least half of their peers active on social media.

Our take

Having an owned and updated social media presence is now the norm for CEOs across industries, placing those who have not yet built a profile behind their peers. Leaders should claim, update and verify at least one social media profile to keep pace with expectations among stakeholders.

CEOs in the financial services sector lead their peers in social media engagement

Executives leading financial institutions have been the most successful in generating likes, shares and comments across social channels.

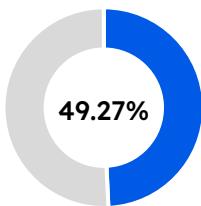
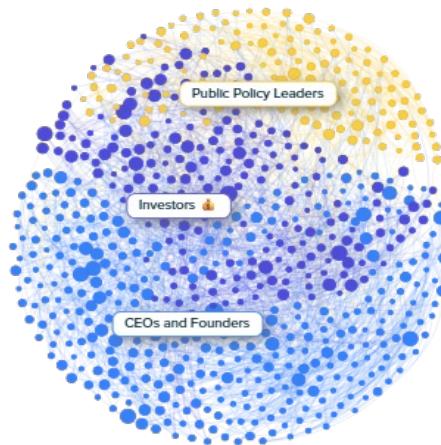


Our take

For the last three years, financial services CEOs have been among the most present on social media. As other industries seek to keep pace, they can look to financial institutions' leaders for inspiration on content and channel strategy.

CEOs are connecting with important audiences across digital channels

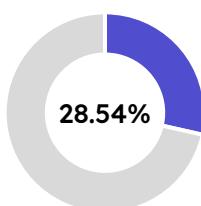
Peers, investors and policy leaders are the three most engaged audiences following CEOs on social media.



Most influential: CEOs and Founders

“CEOs and Founders” are the largest social audience, comprised of peers creating, sharing and liking C-suite-generated social media content.

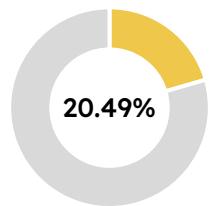
Key Stat: More than 50% likely than other followers to post original content.



Most engaged: Investors

Investors are using their social channels to impact conversations across all audiences, showcasing the greatest reach among “CEOs and Founders” and “Public Policy” experts.

Key Stat: More than 32% likely than other followers to get a “Reply” from their followers.



Most celebrated: Public policy leaders

Despite their small audience size, public policy experts are the most likely to see their posts shared within their social network.

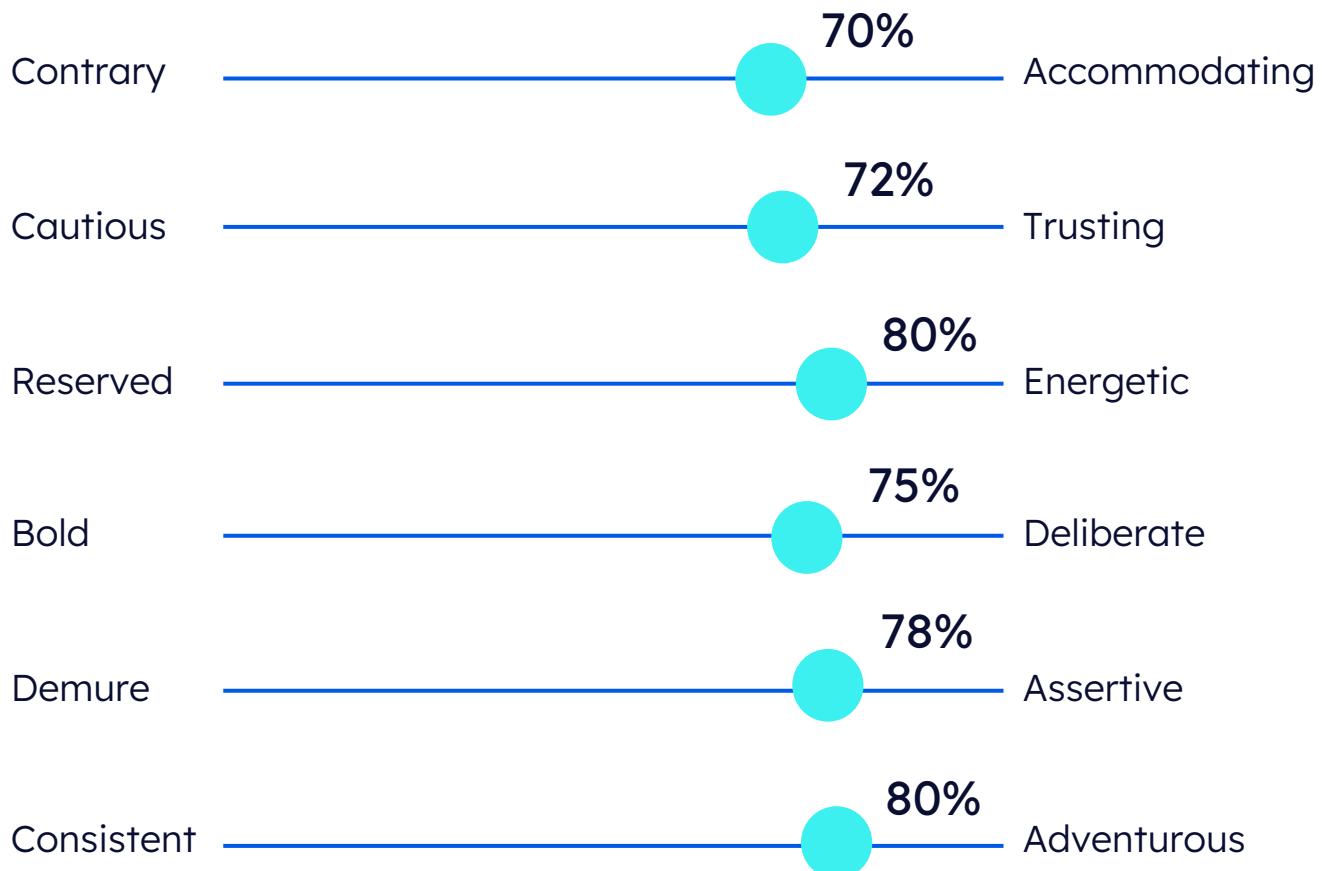
Key Stat: More than 39% likely than other followers to get a “Share” from their followers.

Our take

Executives should tailor content to deliver distinct messages to each audience because each group engages with C-suite posts for different reasons.

Audiences respond best to leaders who showcase a unique voice and tone on their content
Leaders who showcase optimism earn better engagement.

People following CEOs engage the most with voices that are:



Our take

A one-size-fits-all approach to storytelling doesn't work for the C-suite. Leaders should have a distinct tone and point of view, as their audiences expect new perspectives, voices to come to life across digital platforms.

Spotlight: Top 20 most influential voices among CEOs

These C-suite executives are having success online thanks to their use of multiple channels, content strategy and reach.

Name	Company	Affinity	Reach	Channels
 Tim Cook	Apple	<div style="width: 35.85%;"></div> 35.85%	14.85M	    
 Aaron Levie	Box	<div style="width: 30.98%;"></div> 30.98%	2.54M	    
 Marc Benioff	Salesforce	<div style="width: 30.73%;"></div> 30.73%	1.12M	    
 Satya Nadella	Microsoft	<div style="width: 27.8%;"></div> 27.8%	3.44M	    
 Patrick Collison	Stripe	<div style="width: 26.59%;"></div> 26.59%	540.4K	    
 Bill Ackman	Pershing Square	<div style="width: 26.1%;"></div> 26.1%	1.81M	    
 Sundar Pichai	Google	<div style="width: 25.37%;"></div> 25.37%	5.57M	    
 Brian Armstrong	Coinbase	<div style="width: 24.39%;"></div> 24.39%	1.56M	    
 Eric Schmidt	Google*	<div style="width: 24.88%;"></div> 24.88%	2.17M	    
 Tobi Lütke	Shopify	<div style="width: 23.41%;"></div> 23.41%	399.8K	    
 Garry Tan	Y Combinator	<div style="width: 23.17%;"></div> 23.17%	577.0K	    
 Michael Dell	Dell	<div style="width: 21.95%;"></div> 21.95%	784.4K	    
 Daniel Ek	Spotify	<div style="width: 20.49%;"></div> 20.49%	315.1K	    
 Drew Houston	Dropbox	<div style="width: 20.0%;"></div> 20.0%	269.4K	    
 Gary Vaynerchuk	VaynerMedia	<div style="width: 22.2%;"></div> 22.2%	3.04M	    
 Linda Yaccarino	X*	<div style="width: 18.78%;"></div> 18.78%	670.6K	    
 Tim O'Reilly	O'Reilly Media	<div style="width: 19.27%;"></div> 19.27%	1.58M	    
 David Marcus	Lightspark	<div style="width: 17.56%;"></div> 17.56%	188.6K	    
 Greg Isenberg	Late Checkout	<div style="width: 17.56%;"></div> 17.56%	498.8K	    
 Cathie Wood	ARK Invest	<div style="width: 17.56%;"></div> 17.56%	1.82M	    

*Former CEO

Affinity measures the amount of engagement an online author earned among target audiences, with special regard for topics those audiences are the most interested in.

CEOs see stronger social media engagement by prioritizing quality over quantity.

With digital platform algorithms evolving, executives are focused less on post cadence and more on sharing relevant and compelling content

Post volume is down

-36%

Decrease in post volume across channels, with the steepest drop on X (96% decrease).

Engagement is up

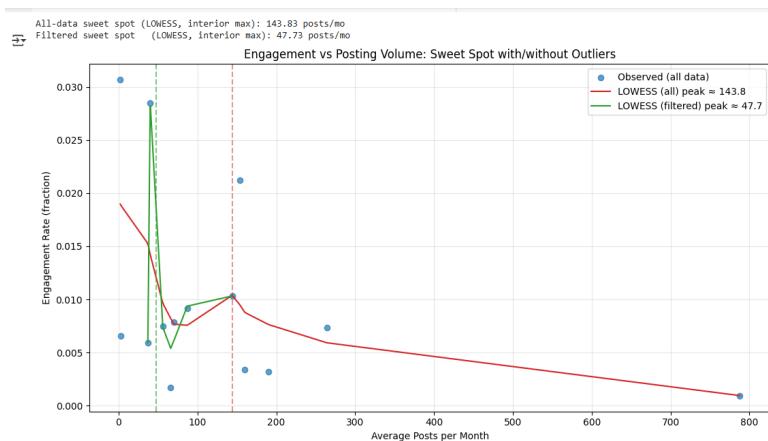
+19%

Engagement rate increase across channels.

CEOs who post too often on social media earn lower engagement

A high post cadence has led to diminishing returns for many senior leaders.

LinkedIn performance by post volume

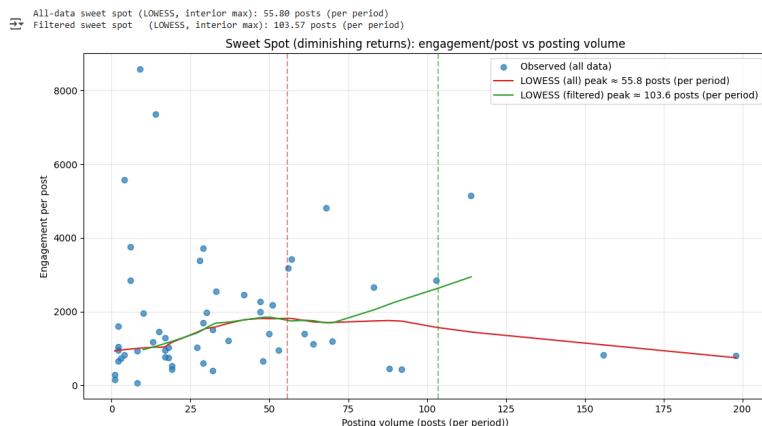


Engagement quality on LinkedIn declines after

9

Posts-per-month

X performance by post volume



Engagement quality on X decreases after

47

Posts-per-month

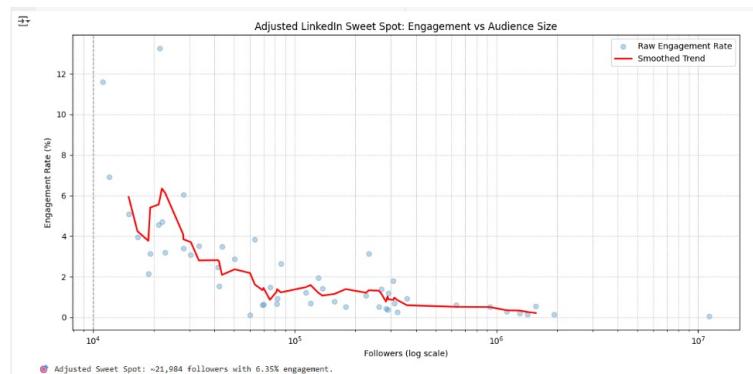
Our take

Leaders do not need to post frequently to be effective on social media. Instead, they should focus on sharing meaningful content that resonates with stakeholders, especially during moments that shape reputation.

A large follower count does not always translate to high engagement

CEOs with millions of social media followers often face greater challenges in earning meaningful engagement.

LinkedIn performance by audience size

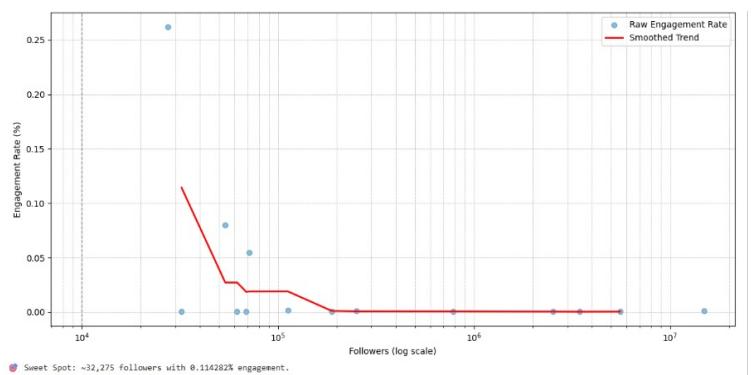


Engagement quality on LinkedIn decreases after

22K

Followers

X performance by audience size



Engagement quality on X decreases after

32K

Followers

Our take

For CEOs, a moderately sized audience of key stakeholders is far more valuable than a large but disengaged follower base. Instead of focusing on follower growth as the primary metric, CEOs should measure organic reach within and beyond their follower networks to determine how well their content is performing.

Different social media platforms deliver varying levels of impact for CEOs

Likes, shares and comments increased on LinkedIn and Instagram, declined on X.

LinkedIn engagement rate

#1

4.6%

Executives post three times per month – the fewest across channels but earning a category best engagement rate.

Instagram engagement rate

#2

4.0%

Executives post six times per month, earning the second-best engagement rate across channels.

X engagement rate

#3

>1%

Executives post on X the most – 12-times per month – but earn the lowest engagement rate there across channels.

Our take

For CEOs, finding the right channel is as important as finding the right topic. An overinvestment in channels that don't yield a return creates a gap between good content and online noise.

CEOs are making strategic adjustments by social media channel

Each channel has unique algorithms, audience behaviors, and content formats. Selecting the right platform is essential to ensure content resonates and performs well among targeted audiences.

LinkedIn

70%

Of CEOs are on the platform, making it the most popular social media channel among CEOs.

+15%

Engagement rate increase, the best among social media channels.

37%

Of active CEOs on LinkedIn increased their activity, the most across social media platforms.

Instagram

#2

Best engagement rate among social media channels.

1.2M

Average following among CEOs, making it second in audience volume behind X.

#1

Company news was the most liked topic from CEO accounts, making it strategically aligned with executive content strategy.

X (formerly Twitter)

53%

Decrease in executive profiles on X, bringing CEO presence on the platform to a three-year low.

81%

Decrease in posting activity by CEOs on X, the sharpest decline among all social media channels.

#1

Most visible social media platform for CEOs.

Our take:

CEO posts on LinkedIn are achieving their highest engagement in three years, making the platform the leading choice for senior executives to build their digital presence.

Our take:

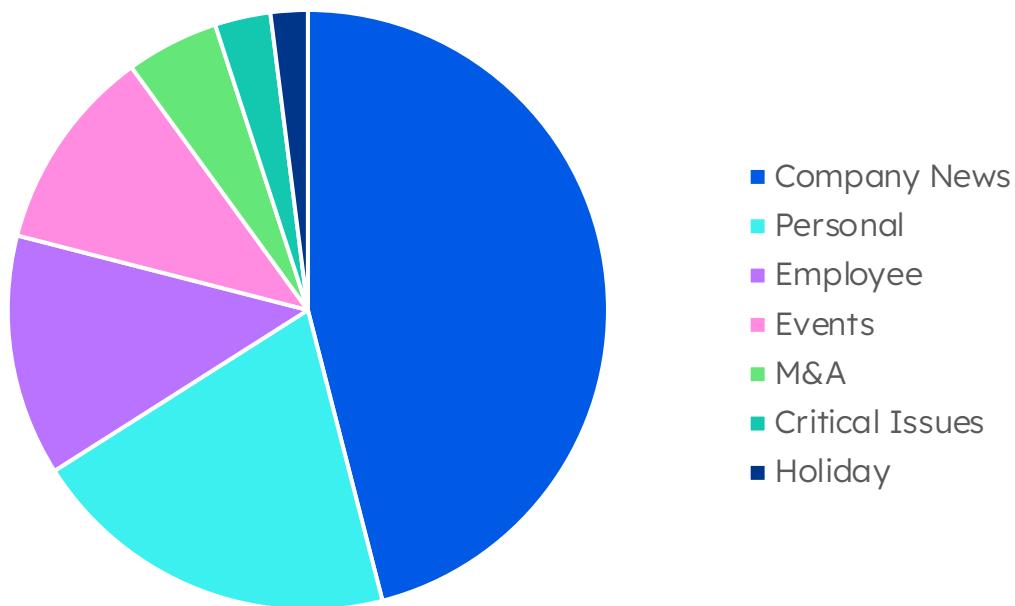
CEOs are effectively using Instagram's visual-first algorithm to share compelling business stories. With its strong reach and engagement, Instagram is becoming a key platform for leaders seeking to enhance their reputation.

Our take:

X is no longer a priority platform for senior leaders but remains the most visible of social media channels within the modern news cycle.

“Company News” ranks as the most popular social media content for CEOs

For the third consecutive year, CEOs achieved the most engagement when they focused on telling their company's story.



Personal stories on the rise

20% +90%

Executives have increased personal storytelling by nearly double since 2023, making it the fastest rising topic on social media.

Our take

Digital platforms give CEOs a powerful way to do what they do best: Communicate about their business. While topics like company culture or personal stories can shine a light on executive personalities and virtues, articulating company's strategy, vision, and impact will typically gain better engagement.

Video content increasing in popularity among CEOs

Both short- and long-form videos are becoming increasingly popular as CEOs seek new ways to share their stories.

71% of CEOs active on social media are utilizing video.

Only 16% of CEOs use blogs, newsletters or podcasts to communicate.

Blogs (#3) and Podcasts (#5) rank among the most popular channels for audiences to get information from CEOs.

Our take

Videos can offer a powerful way to humanize leadership, showcase personality and make messages feel more authentic.

Other media, like newsletters and podcasts, are underutilized given their popularity among audiences following CEOs. Executives should strive to find a white space to share their messages in places most likely to reach key stakeholders.

C-suite executives are using social media to shape opinions on society, business and their industries.

Executives with an established social media presence are leading the way when addressing critical issues facing society.

+26%

Increase in critical issues posts among CEOs who were named LinkedIn top voices

CEOs aiming for more formal recognition as thought leaders

Executives continue to earn LinkedIn 'Top Voices' badge.

73%

Of Fortune 100, earned 'Top Voices' badge

How CEOs are earning their 'Top Voices' badge on LinkedIn

Staying active

4x

Posts-per-month

Staying focused on the business

50%

Of content related to company news and culture

Finding the right audience

683K

Average followers

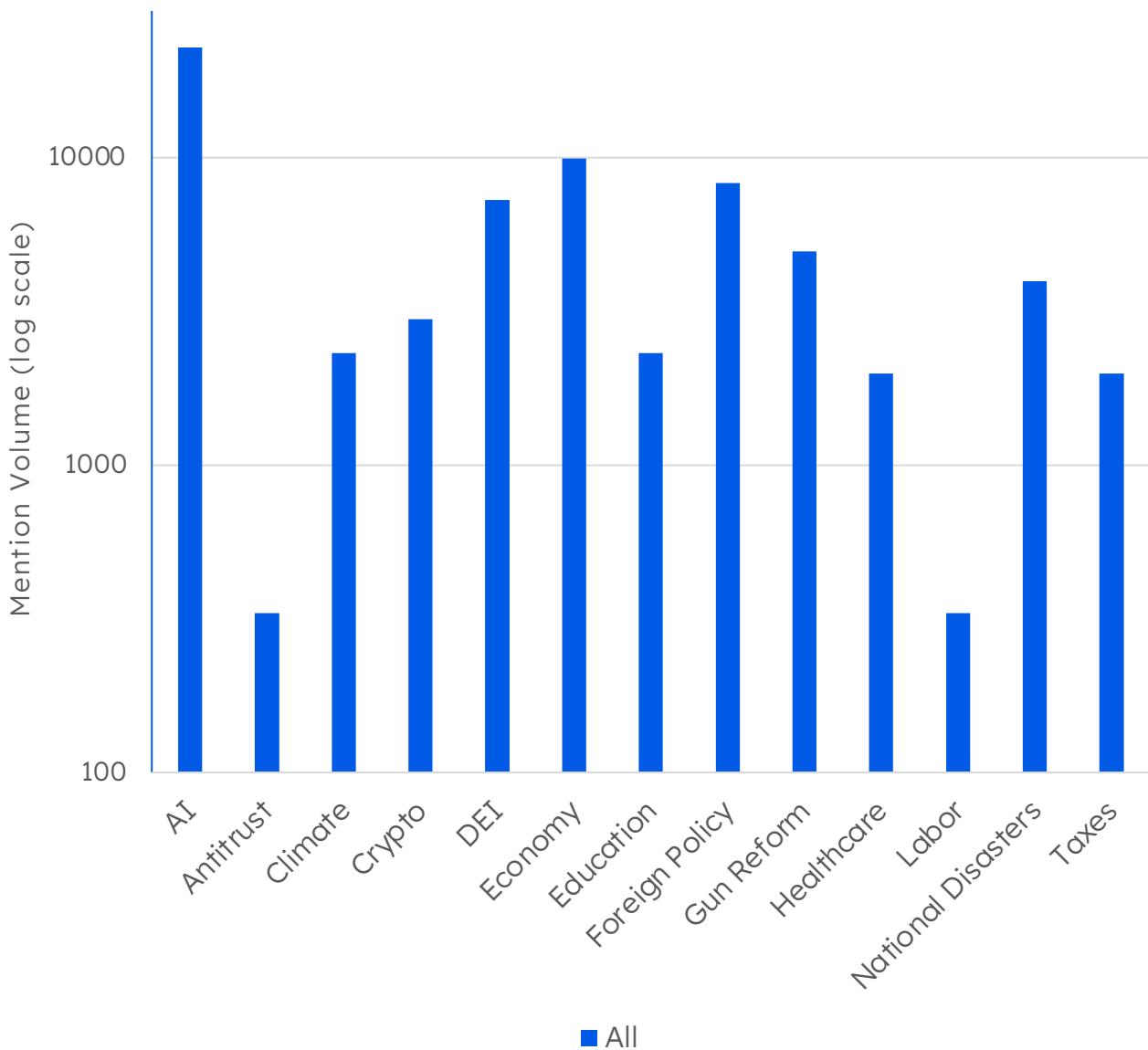
Our take

LinkedIn's 'Top Voices' badge has become an important credibility marker for CEOs, helping to build long-term trust among peers, investors, customers and policy makers.

LinkedIn also values consistency—the platform reviews badges every six months to reward executives who regularly share relevant, insightful content.

Artificial Intelligence is the most popular critical issue among CEOs active on social media

Posts regarding AI rose 32% year-over-year.



Our take

With AI moving to the forefront in conversations among CEOs, leaders can help set the stage for how the technology will be discussed among investors, customers, employees, and lawmakers as each group tries to better understand how AI will impact society and business at large.

Top 10 CEOs on critical issues

When it comes to addressing issues of the day, these are the executives with the loudest voices.

Author Name	Company	Impact	Reach
		Average	Average
 Tim Cook	<i>Apple</i>	97.1	1,363,376
 Sundar Pichai	<i>Google</i>	90.5	358,161
 Marvin Ellison	<i>Lowe's</i>	89.9	634,041
 Satya Nadella	<i>Microsoft</i>	88	255,152
 Mary Barra	<i>General Motors</i>	84.9	215,575
 Andy Jassy	<i>Amazon</i>	82.5	134,196
 Michael Dell	<i>Dell Technologies</i>	82	218,689
 Pat Gelsinger	<i>Intel</i> /*	68.5	78,120
 Jim Farley	<i>Ford</i>	67	55,228
 Chuck Robbins	<i>Cisco Systems</i>	61.7	26,660

*Former Chief Executive officer, data reflects statistics through December 2024

During critical moments, original posts earn more engagement than reposts and comments

CEOs leading with their own opinion have better results.

Leading with an opinion

51%

Of all posts related to critical issues were original posts, as CEOs opt to lead with their opinions first.

Earning more positive engagement

3X

Original posts are more than three-times as likely to earn positive engagement than reposts or comments.

Our take

CEOs are most effective when they lead with their own voice rather than reposting or commenting on others' opinions. Initiating conversations demonstrates leadership and intent, while allowing executives to stand confidently behind their views

Top social voices led the way when addressing critical issues online

Leaders who earned a LinkedIn 'Top Voices' badge were far more likely to address critical issues than their peers.

LinkedIn 'Top Voices' speaking out

46%

Of CEOs named to LinkedIn 'Top Voices' commented on critical issues, leading the way among peers.

2X

LinkedIn 'Top Voices' were more than twice as likely to comment on a critical issue on social media than peers.

Our take

Many social-media-savvy CEOs take a cautious yet willing approach to addressing sensitive topics, often sharing perspectives across multiple platforms. Our research shows that executives who remain silent on societal issues risk losing their thought-leadership position to bolder voices.

Conclusion

As the digital landscape shifts, so should your executive communications strategy.

- Focus on engagement not activity.
- Use an “audience-first” approach to developing content.
- Anchor your message on your business and industry.
- Find your authentic voice.
- Consider getting in front of the camera.
- Choose the right social media channels.
- Own an accurate and updated digital profile.
- Choose your issue advocacy carefully.
- Lead with your opinion, not others.
- Consider social media’s active role in the news cycle.

Methodology

H/Advisors Abernathy conducted a comprehensive analysis of over 300 prominent social media accounts, including Fortune 100 CEOs, policymakers, and influential business leaders, to understand their content, channel management, and engagement strategies.

We analyzed over 5,000 posts across LinkedIn, X, and Instagram, focusing on content published between Jan 1- Dec 31, 2024.

The content yielded more than 7,500 data points for analysis quantified by:

- **Volume:** What is the quantity and average 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?
- **Sentiment:** Was public response to content negative, neutral or positive?
- **Profile optimization:** Were social media profiles recent, accurate, discoverable via organic searches and complete?
- **Content strategy:** What themes showed up consistently in editorial strategy?
- **Impact:** What is the potential impact of an online author, site, or mention on a scale of 0-100, measured by reach, views, shares and reshares?
- **Affinity:** How much engagement has an online author earned among a target audiences, with special regard for topics they are most interested in?
- **Reach:** What is the total number of unique people who see content at least once?

To preserve data integrity, H/Advisors Abernathy deliberately excluded content deemed inconsequential for the purpose of this analysis, including posts from possible fake accounts, posts with inflated reach indicative of possible unfair algorithm adjustments and posts that were not relevant to the nature of this study. Use of executive profiles outside the Fortune 100 were included to enhance directional accuracy of certain data points, ensuring they would have been otherwise statistically insufficient.

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https://bit.ly/HAA_DigitalStrat