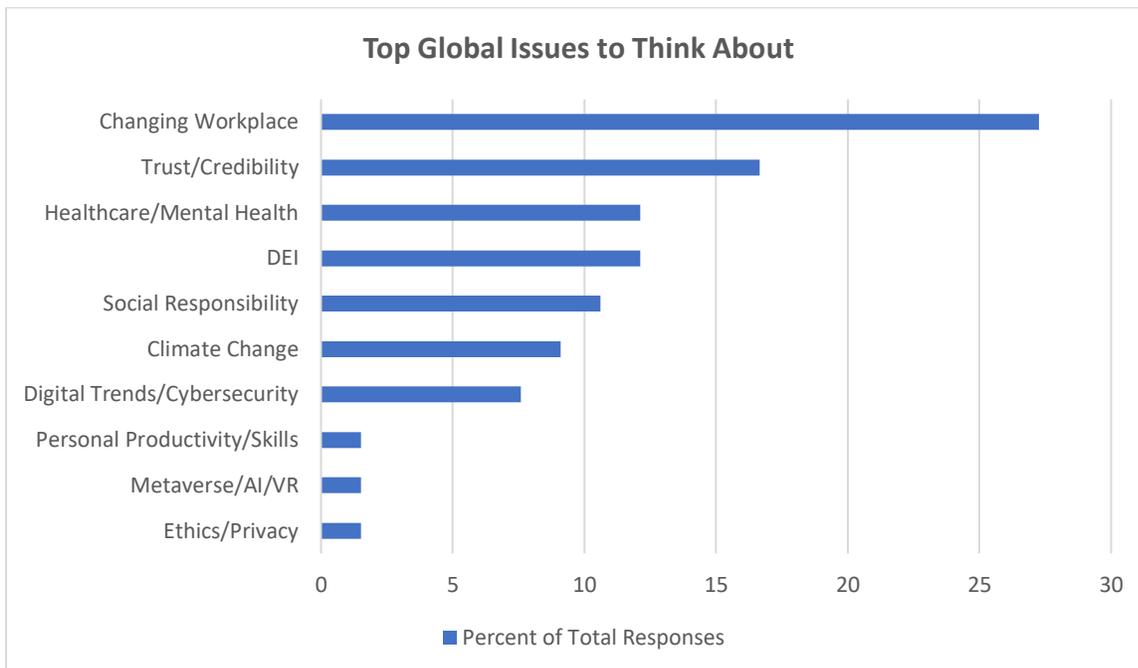


IABC Heritage Region Webinar—New Trends: Don't React. Prepare.

Presented by Joe Bobbey, IABC Trends Watch Committee

Poll Results

From a list of 10 general categories of global trends, 33 participants in the poll were asked to pick the top two trends that communicators should be thinking about.



Q&A Summary

Q: I have noticed lots of COVID-19 fatigue. Very little media coverage on the 4th booster. How can we get more coverage?

A: Little can be done about how much is covered in the media, but if your company is looking for guidance and how to communicate it, there are sources on the latest developments and responses. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has timely updates that can be vetted with your company's own position and communicated internally.

Q: How could I have prepared ahead of time for a situation like COVID-19?

A: Our experience with COVID-19 did provide some valuable lessons on how we can prepare for other potentially unique crises with little warning. Back in March 2020 we didn't know COVID-19 would eventually lead to a million deaths in the US and major disruptions to our personal and professional lives. We did learn to be more open to new and changing developments, how to identify and avoid bad information, and how to communicate with more empathy and understanding of the impact on our workforce, customers and other stakeholders.

Q: How can we ensure we are identifying trends based on “on the ground” realities vs. emotions / opinions / wish fulfillment?

A: Data- and research-based inquiry, as well as credible sources, should be used to build a case for following a trend and anticipating how it will result in risks or opportunities.

Q: Have you heard that companies are adding more floating holidays that employees can use as desired as part of efforts to promote inclusivity?

A: According to the Zippia job website, “48% of companies provide ‘floating’ holidays, which allow an employee to observe a holiday of their choice.”

Q: Are companies using the ability to continue working remotely – or the ability to choose where they work – as part of recruiting efforts to overcome effects of the Great Resignation?

A: Companies are taking a range of options, and it may be too early to identify a meaningful consensus of working on-site, remotely, or in some hybrid variation. However, more job listings are making it clear whether positions include remote or hybrid work options. But many company positions (manufacturing, customer facing, etc.) will always limit the number of remote opportunities. The Trends Watch Committee will want to keep tabs on how the trend is having impacts on the workforce.

Q: Is there any insight into how AI is going to impact internal comms?

A: Trends Watch Committee members addressed the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) from the perspective of ethics and transparency in a 2021 *Catalyst* article, [“We Wrote This ... Or Did We?”](#)

Q: How would chief reputation officer (CRO) be different from chief communication officer (CCO)?

A: Although a chief communication officer or chief marketing officer can include the role of “chief reputation officer,” the dedicated chief reputation officer would be more involved in policies and processes created and maintained by the organization to perform reputably, operationally, financially, etc. The July 2016 issue of *Financier Worldwide* magazine has a good overview, [Rise of the Chief Reputation Officer](#). (Note: CRO can also refer to chief risk officer.)

Q: There are risks to staying silent, not only in speaking up. How can companies assess these risks and accurately identify opportunities to grow value to community and/or brand reputation? It can’t just be about avoiding the risks of making a statement.

A: Making the decision to comment or stay silent can be a risk or an opportunity, depending on how that decision aligns with the beliefs of each individual or group of stakeholders. The key is getting initial input on how audiences might be expected to respond – favorably or unfavorably. Knowing that there will inevitably be those who disagree with any decision, it’s important to be prepared to provide easy access to clear, factual information that makes the best case for the decision.

Q: Was that debate on CEOs/speaking out on the IABC Hub? Do you see the ability to debate virtually or discuss trends/recommendations on The Hub as a significant benefit of IABC membership?

A: The decision to present the topic of CEOs speaking out as a virtual debate resulted from a lively discussion on the topic within the committee. We saw this as an opportunity to further engage membership. Opening a conversation on the The Hub or hosting a streaming conversation format are among additional opportunities the Trends Watch Committee can explore.

Additional Comments

I'm seeing a severe shortage of talent. We have lots of job openings, especially in public relations.

With the latest in mass shootings, I plead with companies to take on safety and security for members of our communities overall.

Companies need to take a stand. It's always risky, but it's become clear globally (and in US) that you should have a position on some key issues. Look at Ukraine – top to bottom – they speak out with moral clarity and it's instructive for many.

RE Disney: They're a cautionary tale because they were donating to people who were anti-LGBTQ and then backtracked when their employees (and guests) got mad. Better to take a stand on hot topic upfront – whatever that position might be. Be brave and own your corporate values.

Focus on what your key message is for YOUR customers or stakeholders, then communicate directly with them.

Need to broaden our crisis communication plans to include diseases, government actions, etc. Work across the organization to uncover emerging issues that could generate a "crisis."

In our company's marketing communication to internal corporate legal teams, managing reputational risk is part of the messaging. Companies are checking the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Environmental) ratings and reputational risk elements regarding third parties they enter business relationships with.