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Authentic and accessible leadership has never been more important. Connected Leadership is so much more than being active online — and critical to get right.

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Craig Mullaney

Partner, Brunswick Group

@craigmmullaney

Introduction

The challenges companies and their leaders must navigate are ever-growing —

from the long-term effects of the global pandemic and 'great resignation' affecting how and where they interact with employees, to social injustice and geopolitical upheaval compelling instantaneous action. How leaders respond to these challenges increasingly relies on the immediacy, scale, and resonance of digital platforms. The line that once sat between what is online and offline has been permanently erased.

As has been established in previous years of this report, stakeholders expect executives to use social media to lead. **But it has never been more important to get it right.**

Joining the conversation on social media is only the first small step. Being effective requires a strategy, resources, and commitment. Leaders who understand the importance of communicating online build authentic, trusted, engaging platforms that advance business objectives and lead to tangible, real-world outcomes. From recruiting new talent, to leading through crises, to fostering investor and media relations, Connected Leadership acts as a force multiplier across an organization's critical challenges.

Connected Leadership Research

Connected Leadership is the authoritative platform for understanding how modern businesses can redefine leadership in a connected world. Since launching the platform in 2019, Brunswick has advised more than 220 executives — 20 of whom are influencers on various platforms — at 130+ of the world's leading companies and organizations.

Survey

We asked 2,800 readers of financial publications and 3,600 employees of companies with more than 1,000 employees — groups emblematic of the external stakeholders business leaders want to reach — about their communications expectations of corporate leaders across 7 different countries and markets. These included Germany, Hong Kong SAR, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the UAE, the United Kingdom, and the United States.















Interviews



16 companies



3.1M employees



\$1.6TUSD 2021 Revenue

We conducted 16 in-depth interviews with best-inclass Connected Leaders and their teams at leading companies around the world representing over 3.1M employees across 11 different sectors and more than \$1.6T USD in revenue in 2021. The insights gathered from these interviews show the tangible benefits of Connected Leadership across every industry and business critical issue.



Click to explore Connected Leadership resources: **brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership**

1. Stakeholders expect Connected Leadership

Digital communications are a critical dimension of leadership. While social media was once considered a new, modern way for executives to communicate with stakeholders, globally dispersed audiences and the 24-hour news cycle have made the scale and immediacy of online tools a necessity.

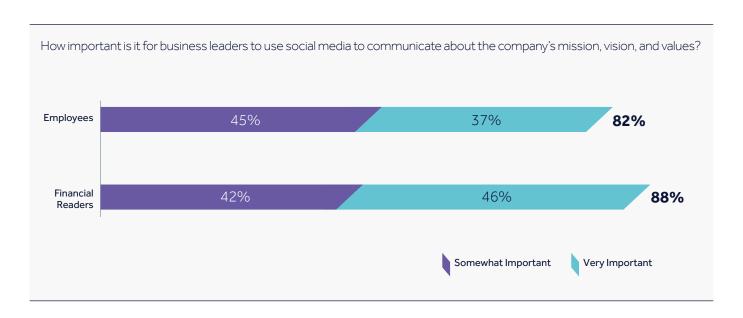
Digital and social media are no longer simply aspects of an organization's communications and marketing functions — nor are they optional; they are important tools for companies and their leaders to engage with a suite of stakeholders. Employees and financial readers expect corporate leaders to use these platforms for a range of issues — from the company's mission, vision, and values to crises. This isn't surprising given the degree to which they rely on social media to stay informed. 88% of employees and financial readers use social media each month, compared to 70% who use traditional media sources.

And, as this report explores further, there are real and tangible benefits for leaders who reach people where they are: online. Doing so enables executives to communicate directly and with speed, control the narrative, and positively influence the company's reputation.

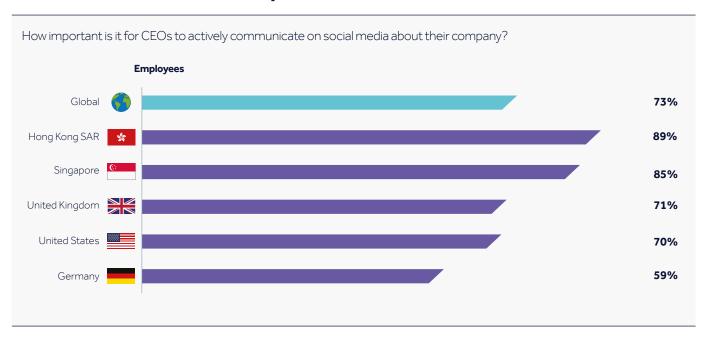
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There is now an expectation that a CEO or a leader is very present on social media. It's not just like sharing a press release. It's about having a stance, an opinion, talking about the difficult topics. If we want to attract and retain the best, new, and emerging talent, we need to be engaged on these platforms.

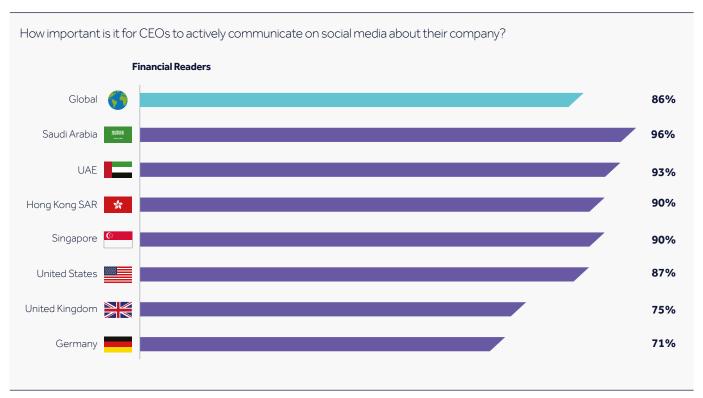
- International Airline



Employees expect their leaders to use social media to communicate with the public



Financial readers believe it is even more important for business leaders to communicate about their companies on social media

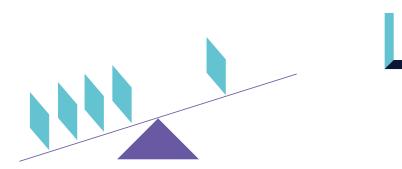


2. Connected Leadership is key to employee engagement

The great resignation and return to office have made the competition for talent fiercer than ever. In the competition to recruit, engage, and retain top talent, Connected Leaders have an advantage.

Potential employees use a range of digital and social media channels to research the leaders of future employers. Connected Leaders are viewed as more accessible and transparent, both of which are key reasons employees join and stay with an employer. 9 out of 10 employees cite having a leader who communicates directly and transparently as a factor for staying with an employer, closely following benefits and compensation.

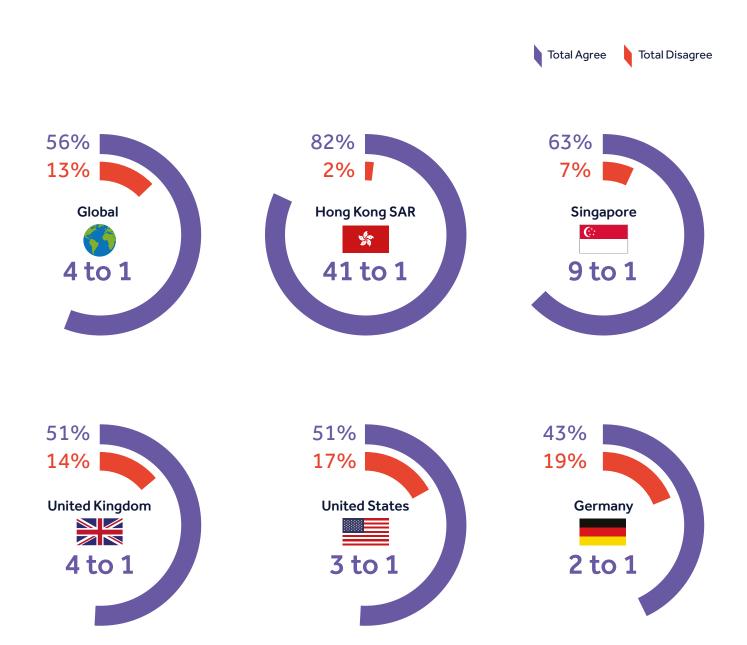
The emergence of hybrid work as part of the new normal in many sectors makes Connected Leadership even more important. Few employees across markets expect to return to work onsite full-time once the pandemic has ended. With such a wide range in employee preferences for the return to the office and the subsequent dispersal of employees, leaders must adopt effective strategies to remain connected and engaged.



By a **4 to 1 ratio**, employees would prefer to work for a CEO who uses social media compared to one who does not



All else being equal, I would prefer to work for a CEO who uses digital and social media as part of their work more than a CEO who does not:



Practical benefits drive employee preference for Connected Leaders

Why would you prefer to work for a CEO who uses digital and social media?



Social media is crucial for us to signal and message to our colleagues around the world. We have a lot of effective and well-used internal communication channels. Still, for at least some of our colleagues, the message isn't real until they hear the CEO say it externally.

- Multinational Infrastructure and Technology Company

Connected Leadership is a recruitment advantage

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Social media has been a great advantage for recruitment. There has been a direct correlation between how we talk about our strategy and purpose online and an uptick in interest to join the company. In fact, we have seen actual applications increase for certain roles as a result. The transparency of our leaders on social media has been a big factor for this growth.

- International Energy Company

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Our CEO is very authentic, very high energy. He's the face of the brand. His engagement online is a great advertisement for the company and in attracting great talent.

- Global Financial Services Company

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One meaningful benefit from my activity on LinkedIn is access to great candidates who are interested in coming to work at the company that I otherwise wouldn't have access to.

- Multinational Biopharmaceutical Corporation

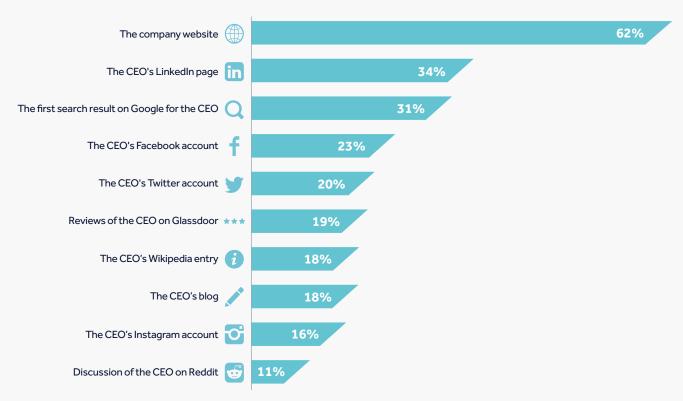
Potential employees draw their

first impressions online



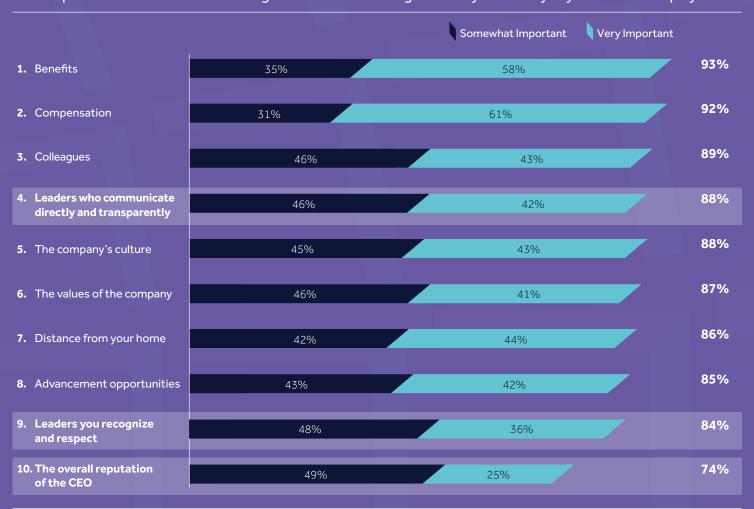
of employees will research a CEO's online presence when considering joining a company





Direct and transparent leadership are leading retention factors

How important are each of the following factors when deciding whether you will stay at your current employer?





There isn't really a divide between internal and external communications. It is often better to take the inside-out approach. Pull the curtain back and publish the internal note for external people to see on social media. Ultimately, that helps with transparency and shows we're not hiding anything.

- International Energy Company

Hybrid work makes Connected Leadership essential

Just 3 in 10 employees working in a different location due to the pandemic expect to return to work on-site full-time.

With such a wide range in employee expectations for the return to the office, leaders must adopt effective strategies to remain connected and engaged – wherever their employees are working.

How many days per week do you expect to work on-site at a company location once the COVID-19 pandemic ends?

	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Global	10%	8%	18%	19%	11%	31%
United States	21%	6%	15%	14%	9%	30%
United Kingdom	12%	14%	24%	20%	7%	19%
Germany	5%	10%	24%	27%	11%	17%
Singapore	4%	5%	17%	24%	13%	33%
Hong Kong SAR 🕏	2%	2%	7%	12%	16%	62%

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LinkedIn is a way to be in the room together when we can't be in the room together.

- Multinational Biopharmaceutical Corporation

3. Connected Leadership is a competitive advantage online and offline

A CEO's social media activity should not exist in a vacuum. As an integrated part of an executive's leadership platform, social media can complement and reinforce traditional offline activities. In turn, this can lead to tangible, real-world outcomes of its own.

Social media can be a force multiplier for executive platforms. Stakeholders' ubiquitous use of digital platforms means that leaders can influence conversations, reach new audiences, and shape reputation across a range of objectives. From providing deep background for journalists, to advancing public affairs initiatives with policymakers, to complementing traditional investor relations activities, Connected Leadership can amplify an organization's most important messages to its stakeholders.



One of our goals is to serve as a partner in service and responsible innovation with organizations and entities across the board from government to non-profits to private companies. If one government official or community leader reads a message about how we're protecting their stakeholders, it's just as impactful as half a million others.

- Global Fintech Company



I've gotten some really appealing and generous invitations to speak. I'm always trying to broaden the audiences that I can tell our company's story to, and I get many overtures for speaking engagements through Linkedln.

- Multinational Biopharmaceutical Corporation



LinkedIn has been invaluable with helping our leadership make our case to policymakers.

- International Airline



Leaders tend to be very isolated. Everyone tells you what you want to hear. Social media is a way to listen to people, unfiltered, to understand what's happening on the ground, or how people are perceiving what's going on. At its best, it's a personal conversation, at scale.

- Multinational Technology Company

Connected Leadership complements traditional investor relations

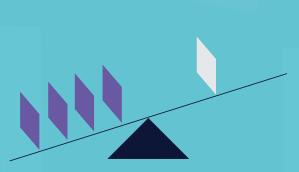
*Data from 2021 Digital Investor Survey



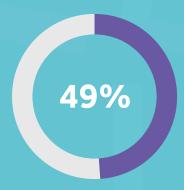
of investors use digital to investigate an issue



of investors use digital and social media sources to learn what a CEO is saying



4 out of 5 investors use digital to make an investment decision



1 out of 2 investors use digital and social media sources to learn what members of the C-suite are saying

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Investors increasingly use these channels as ways of taking the temperature of a company. Investors like certainty. They don't want to be surprised. Our investors tell us they appreciate seeing on social media what's going on with our leadership, warts and all. It gives them a window into the shop.

- International Energy Company

Social media platforms enable communications on a leader's own terms

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Social media is an important messaging channel for a firm's senior leadership. It's a very powerful driver of engagement and brand awareness.

> - Multinational Investment Bank and **Financial Services Company**

There's a lot of criticism about our industry. We wanted a platform to engage people directly and tell our own narrative rather than let someone else tell our narrative for us. Social media helps us listen and have two-way conversations. This is where we're actually able to change opinions. What our CEO really cares about is engaging with our community, getting on the level with people who are our customers, investors, and shareholders.

- International Energy Company

The CEO reflects the company's values and is the person who instills confidence in the business. It's not possible just to be silent. You have to build a cadence of helping people understand how you think. It helps you lead the organization and drive change.

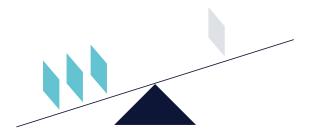
- Multinational Restaurant Company

4. Authentic Connected Leadership builds trust

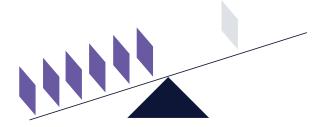
Authentic leadership is key to fostering relationships online. Audiences won't follow someone they don't trust. And they can't trust someone they don't know.

While financial readers and employees alike trust leaders who use social media more than those who do not, the importance of genuine and authentic content was reinforced throughout our conversations with top Connected Leaders. Authenticity will differ for each executive. It can mean discussing hobbies and non-business interests, or showing engagement with employees, or even simply using colloquialisms that come naturally to the executive.

This style of Connected Leadership helps build a reservoir of trust before it's needed. Leaders who have established trusted platforms online are better equipped to reassure stakeholders when it matters most. In a crisis, 78% of employees and 91% of financial readers expect a CEO to communicate on social media, where speed and control are essential.



Employees trust Connected Leaders by a 3 to 1 ratio



Financial readers trust Connected Leaders by a 6 to 1 ratio

People don't listen to logos or brands.

They listen to people that they like and people that they trust.

- Fortune 100 Retailer



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People want to see the person behind the CEO title. Our success on social media is because it is **genuine**, **authentic**, **and lets people in**.

- International Airline





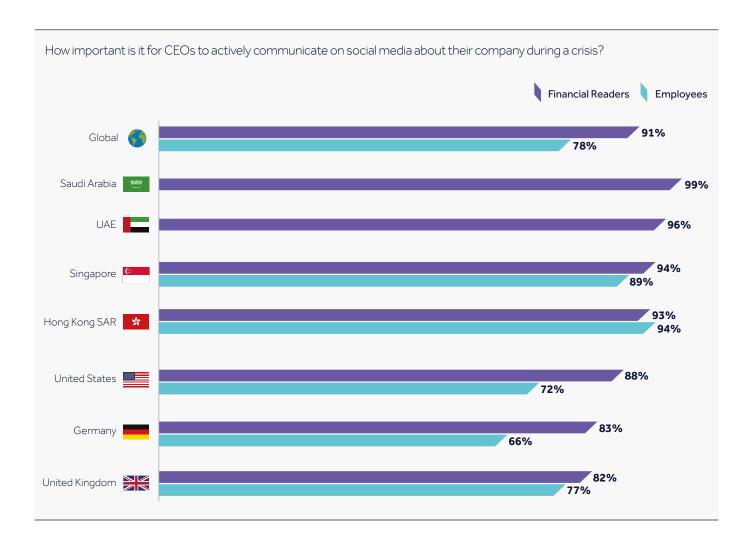
Five years from now, any company that does not have an executive social media strategy will be completely behind in this space. The amount of engagement that you can generate with customers, clients, employees, and even recruits can be so incredibly valuable that every company in the Fortune 500 needs to seriously consider building out an executive social media function if they haven't already.

- Multinational Investment Bank and Financial Services Company



During a crisis, Connected Leaders

have an advantage



In a crisis, social media helps us provide **credible information** when people are getting a lot of mixed messages, manipulative spin, and sometimes lies. We can help shape the narrative with the fact-based truth and inform people about resources.

- Multinational Technology Company

Our CEO's social media channel provides us with a **quick, scalable, personal** way for him to engage as a CEO. In a crisis, I don't think our company would have been able to respond as effectively and efficiently as we did without his LinkedIn platform.

- Global Financial Services Company

Connected Leadership enables executives to act swiftly and directly when necessary

How important is it for leaders of a company to communicate publicly on social media about the following?

Correcting misinformation about the company







A crisis





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The multiple crises in 2020 crystallized the value of executive social media

for us. We had to turn up the volume and frequency of communications, especially with our employee base. Our CEO's platform allowed us to convey what we stood for in a personal way. It would have been much harder to navigate that fast-changing time, that precedent-setting time, without something like LinkedIn.

- Multinational Restaurant Company

A company's diversity, equality, and inclusion initiatives





A social issue in the media





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For our CEO, using LinkedIn was less about the business message, and more about **connecting** with our employees, potential talent, and being **on record** personally leading the organization during a critical period.

- Multinational Restaurant Company

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5: Effective Connected Leadership requires strategy

Connected Leadership touches all aspects of business. While anyone can become a Connected Leader, activating an individual or a team in a way that cuts through the noise and resonates with stakeholders requires a data-informed, strategic approach.

There are a range of important considerations to design and operate a program, including which platform to start with, what topics to post about, and how content is produced. Through our interviews, we learned that all effective Connected Leadership platforms are underpinned by strategies and supported by teams, but no two programs look alike.

However, successful strategies do not require significant time from leaders themselves. Communication and

close coordination between an executive and their team can guarantee their social media content and engagements are authentic. A streamlined approvals process can ensure executives aren't copyediting each comment but have flexibility to weigh in at their own comfort level. Travel teams can be taught how to take engaging photos on the road to eliminate the expense of photographers or additional headcount. Such programs should be tailored to each organization's needs and operating structure.

Social media is **not a game. It's serious business** and very influential when you do it the right way.

- European Automotive Manufacturer

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This is now part of the skillset for a modern CEO. It's not just being present on social media.

You need to be authentic and involved to be effective. People have to trust you. People have to believe in your ideas.

- European Telecommunications Company



There is no one-size-fits-all approach to **Connected Leadership**



Executives spend on average 30-60 minutes their social media platforms



While executives vary in their involvement with social media, the leaders we spoke to spend, on average, less than one hour per week strategizing, capturing content needs, and reviewing results.

Structuring your team and dividing responsibilities requires consideration and thoughtful design

There are a range of ways teams can be structured to support one or multiple executives on social media. Some organizations opt for full-time employees dedicated to such programs, while others utilize agency resources and bring together individuals from across communications, digital, and corporate affairs teams to support executives as only part of their role.



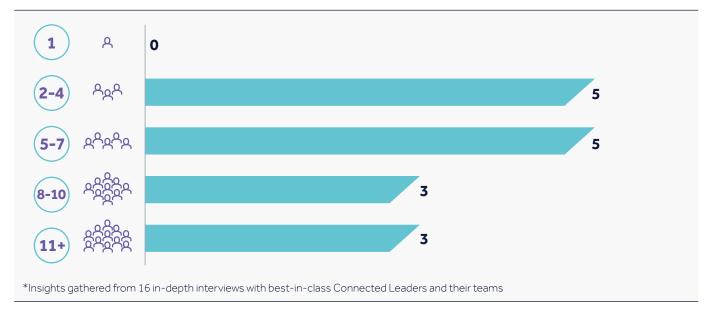
Full-time equivalent resources contributing to Connected Leadership programs per executive:



Programs are growing in size to meet the needs of audiences

Increasingly, it is important for companies to expand the number of executives online to satisfy the needs of all its stakeholders and to tell a more robust story. Doing so allows leaders to amplify and reinforce important company messages on different platforms, talk to distinct audiences, and show collaboration.

Members of the executive leadership team who have actively posted on social media in the past 90 days per company:



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After seeing the success of our CEO's channels as leadership communications tools, we've seen more inclination and enthusiasm from other leaders at our company. The conversation has shifted from us saying 'you need to be on social media' to them asking 'how can we best use social media?'

- Fortune 100 Retailer

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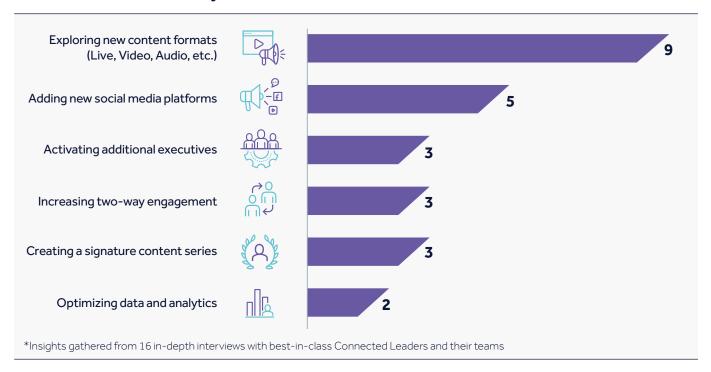
We want a choir of voices to tell our story because each executive brings a unique perspective and can talk to distinct audiences. It's not sustainable for one person to fully carry the organizational message about everything in a fragmented communications environment. We've been focused on building leadership capability to carry the message of the organization further and further to different audiences.

- Multinational Restaurant Company

Looking Ahead

The best leadership programs are constantly evolving.

Areas of investment for the year ahead:



The strategy now is building out the wider leadership team online, to maximize the success we've already had at the CEOlevel. While you're telling a story in different leaders' voices, it's important that they all sing from the same hymn sheet.

- International Airline

Measurement is essential. We track growth and engagement against benchmarks. Who's doing better? What is resonating? Why? We analyze deeply and look to improve continuously.

- Fortune 100 retailer

Conclusion

Connected Leadership is not only expected — it is a business imperative.

Connected Leaders are best positioned to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape, build resiliency, and accelerate their business objectives.

Showing up is no longer sufficient.
Effective strategies deployed across
leadership teams and rooted in authenticity
are necessary to realize the full potential
of Connected Leadership.

Explore the Connected Leadership website and get in touch with us to learn more about how Brunswick can help advance your Connected Leadership journey.

connectedleadership@brunswickgroup.com brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership

About this Report

Connected Leadership Survey

The Connected Leadership Survey was conducted by Brunswick Insight. The 3,600 employees surveyed were individuals across major global markets who are full-time or part-time at for-profit companies with over 1,000 employees. The margin of error for the overall sample is +/- 1% but increases per specific markets and subgroups. Data was collected from February 15 to February 26, 2022. The 2,800 financial readers surveyed were members of the public across major global markets that regularly read at least two financial news publications. The margin of error is +/- 1% but increases per specific markets and subgroups. Data was collected from February 15 to March 1, 2022.

The survey was conducted among respondents that had affirmatively opted into participating in a pre-existing GDPR-compliant online sample. The survey did not collect sensitive personally identifiable information. Surveys for both audiences were fielded in English with the option of the market's native language, where applicable.

Market	Employees	Financial Readers
United States	1,000	400
United Kingdom	1,000	400
Germany	600	400
Singapore	500	400
Hong Kong SAR	500	400
UAE	-	400
Saudi Arabia	-	400

Interviews

The respondents we spoke with in our in-depth interviews were selected as "best-in-class" due to their sustained and varied approaches on social media, in a manner tailored to their business objectives and target audiences. These practitioners ranged from CEOs and business leaders themselves to senior employees in executive communications, corporate communications, and social media. The respondents represented leaders at 16 companies across multiple markets and a wide range of sectors and industries, including automotive, banking, energy and resources, financial services, FinTech, pharmaceutical, quick service restaurants, retail, telecommunications, transportation, and utilities.

About The Authors

Craig Mullaney is a Partner in Brunswick's Washington, D.C. office, where Noah Kristula-Green and Georgina Malloy are Directors, Scott Foster is an Associate, Zach Schoengold is an Account Director, and Meredith Hessel is an Executive. Elizabeth Martin is an Account Director in Brunswick's Dallas office, where Gabriel Roberson is an Executive. Kirsty Cameron is an Associate in Brunswick's San Francisco office.

The report was designed by Adam Taylor, who is a Senior Designer in Brunswick's New York office.

The authors would like to thank Josefine Brühl, Greg Dawson, Meghna George, Lennon Gross, Diana Görlich, Sarah Hasse, Michael Kearns, Tom Levine, Timothy Merritt, Emilia Sipila, Antoine Soussaline, Andrew Williams, Janelle Wright, and Pascale Youssef for their contributions to this report.



Our Capabilities

Brunswick is a strategic advisory firm specializing in critical issues for critical stakeholders. From financial situations to crisis, employee engagement, litigation, and more, clients rely on Brunswick for insight, advice, preparedness, and campaigns.

Across critical issues, we advise executives on effective strategies to **engage stakeholders** and **achieve business outcomes.** Since the launch of Connected Leadership in 2019, Brunswick has worked with 220+ executives at more than 130 of the world's leading organizations to do just that.

At any stage of their Connected Leadership journey, we help executives achieve best-in-class results.

Conducting an In-Depth Audit



Building and Optimizing the Strategy



Target Audiences

Defining who they want to reach



Channel Strategy

Selecting channels based on objectives and audiences



Content Approach

Identifying themes, cadence, voice, and creative



Promotion

Developing a combination of paid and organic tactics



Measurement

Creating a framework for reporting and KPIs



Operations

Crafting an approvals process and community management quidelines

Expanding Online Leadership Programs for Additional Executives

In-Depth Interviews

Discussing objectives, personal interests, and content priorities to develop an authentic content approach

Messaging Workshops

Organizing and prioritizing messages into themes mapped to each executive

Messaging Matrix

Identifying key thematic areas for each executive and articulating a holistic approach

Individualized Playbooks

Crafting tailored approaches for each executive that ladder up to a comprehensive program

Sustaining a Long-Term Approach

- Strategic Advisory
- Platform Advocacy & Engagement
- Editorial Planning & Content Generation
- Paid Media Support
- Community Management
- Analytics & Measurement
- ✓ In-Person or Virtual Training Workshops
- Resourcing Assessment & Recommendations
- Optimizing Operationalized Processes to Scale Over Time

