



Sandpiper Global Reputation Capital Index 2024

MANAGING REPUTATION
AMID DISRUPTION

SCORE CATEGORY
EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

POOR



Inform. Create. Shape.

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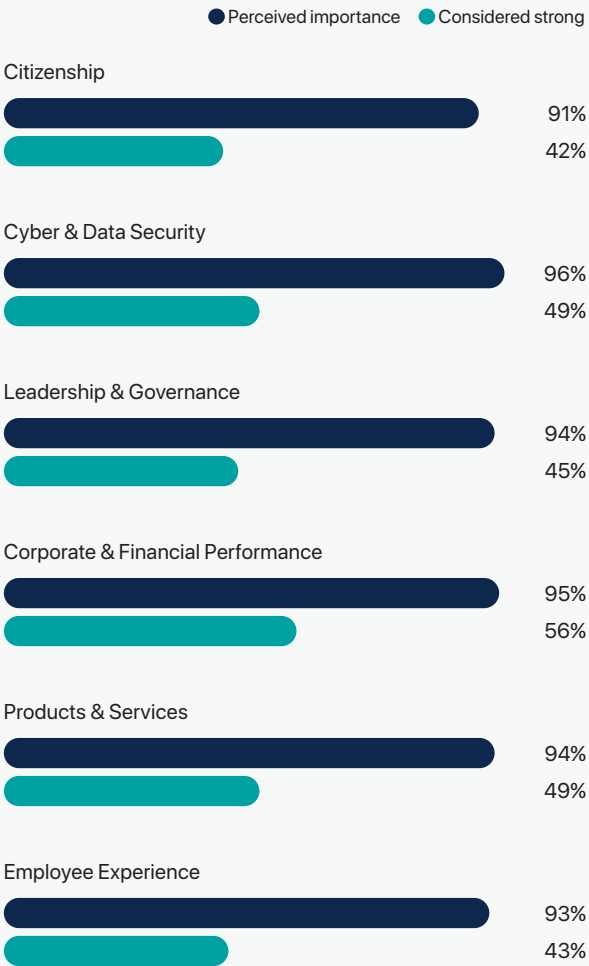


Executive Summary

In 2024, Reputation Management is more complex than ever. Organisations are beset by issues and risks, and constantly looking to do more with less in uneven economic circumstances. They are operating in a world that is paradoxically more connected yet deeply divided.

Amid this landscape, the organisational leaders we surveyed globally for our inaugural **Sandpiper Global Reputation Capital Index** are keenly aware of the importance of reputation, with 98% rating it as important to commercial success.

At the same time, however, most believe reputation is becoming harder to manage. The survey data shows this is largely a result of trending issues, such as the rise of misinformation and disinformation, data privacy and cybersecurity issues, and rising geopolitical tensions (among many others).



When managing these issues, a lack of reputational strength can have real impacts. Nearly three quarters (72%) of leaders globally say reputational weaknesses have negatively impacted their organisations in some way in the past 12 months, including hindering their ability to do business with customers, suffering financial losses, impacting recruitment and talent retention, slowing crisis recovery, and causing issues with managing government and community stakeholder relationships.

At the same time, leaders feel somewhat disempowered in reputational matters, with only 67% of CEOs and 44% of Corporate Affairs Leaders feeling a high level of responsibility for their organisation's reputation. Over half also lack strong access to critical audience and stakeholder insights.

In this setting, the Index seeks to benchmark performance in reputation management to provide a practical and useful assessment of where organisations are excelling and where adjustments are needed.

The Index assesses performance based on nine areas of reputation management: **Reputation Strategy, ESG & Sustainability Strategy, Crisis & Issues Management, Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership, Media Engagement, AI & Digital Environment, Employee Communications, Financial Communications, and Government & Regulatory Affairs.**

While over 80% of respondents rated all of these areas of reputation management as important, less than 50% self-rated their own organisations as strong in these. This strategy to action gap is a consistent theme observed throughout the study findings.

The data for this report was collated from a survey of over 2,700 CEOs, other C-suite Leaders, and Corporate Affairs Leaders working in their global headquarters of their organisations based across 27 markets in six continents. Based on their responses to 51 separate variables across the nine areas of reputation management studied, and using a 0-100 point scale, we have grouped respondents into four performance-based categories: **Trailblazers** (12%), **Aspirants** (54%), **Followers** (32%), and **Beginners** (3%).

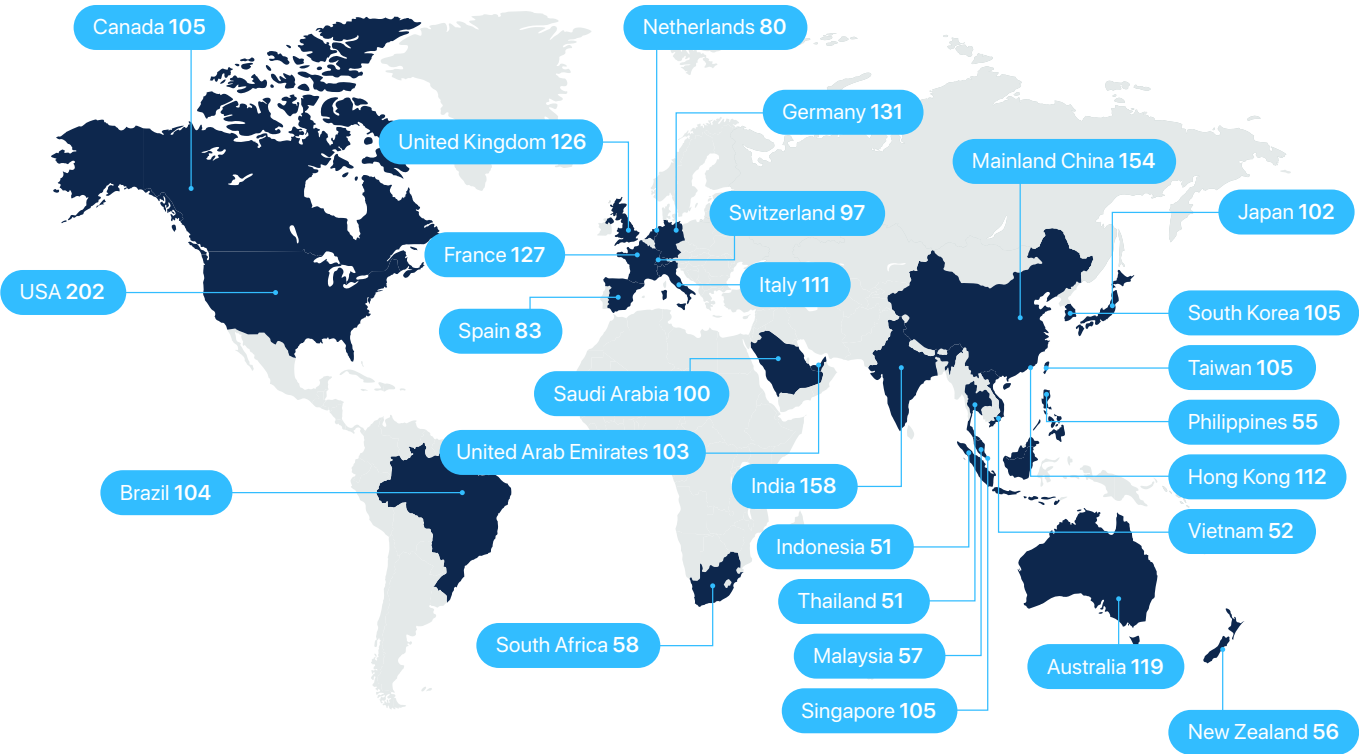
Reputation Strategy and Crisis & Issues Management are the areas of the Index with the highest portion of Trailblazers, with ESG & Sustainability Strategy, Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership, and Media Engagement the lowest. Trailblazers outperform in every area of reputation management.

Despite the number of challenges observed, these appear to be recognised, with more than seven out of 10 leaders saying their organisation plans to increase investment in each area of reputation management over the coming 12 months.

The findings allow us to examine performance in each area of reputation management, and to create an overall global picture of reputation management practices and health. We hope the Index can help organisations assess their own capabilities, understand how their performance compares to global and sector peers, and ultimately use it to support decision making around where to invest time and resources.

Profiles of our Respondents

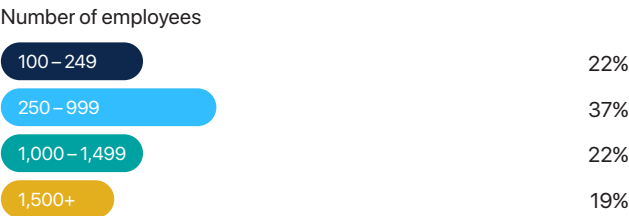
For our 2024 study, we were able to engage with a wide range of organisational leaders from across the world. This unique access allowed us to fully explore the needs, opportunities, and gaps they see in managing their firms' reputations.



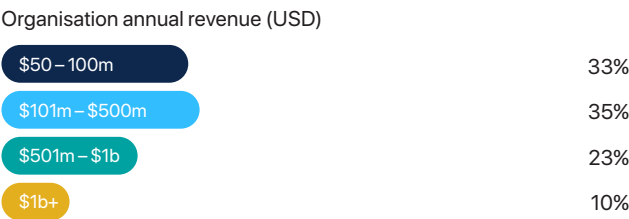
What are their roles?



How big are their companies?



What is their annual revenue?



What are their industries?

Respondent industry	Number of respondents
Business & Professional Services	243
Education	180
Energy, Mining, Natural Resources, Utilities	152
Financial Services	307
Food & Agriculture	119
Healthcare & Wellness	148
Property, Real Estate & Construction	175
Retail, Apparel & Consumer Goods	224
IT, Technology & Telecommunications	707
Travel & Hospitality	49
Transportation	115
Industries & Manufacturing	290

Key Findings

Reputation Management landscape

97% believe **reputation is important** for commercial success.

56% feel reputation is **becoming more difficult to manage**, with 21% saying it is becoming easier.

72% experienced **negative business impacts due to reputational weak spots** over the past year.

↑90% are **concerned about a range of emerging reputational risks**: misinformation and disinformation, data privacy and cybersecurity, employee activism, stakeholder and customer activism, DE&I, media consolidation, and ESG scrutiny and greenwashing claims.

Fairly even levels of importance are placed across the reputation pillars studied:



Corporate & Financial Performance



Products & Services



Employee Experience



Leadership & Governance



Cyber & Data Security



Citizenship

↑90% rate **all pillars of reputation as important**, yet **↓50%** rate their organisations as strong in these, with Corporate & Financial Performance an exception.

85% believe their **headquarters' geographic location** positively influences their **organisation's reputation**.

67% of **CEOs globally feel a high level of responsibility** for their organisation's reputation, yet only **50%** of Corporate Affairs Leaders do.

While **↓50%** have **strong access to stakeholder and audience insights**, those who do score significantly better in influencing and managing audience and stakeholders expectations.

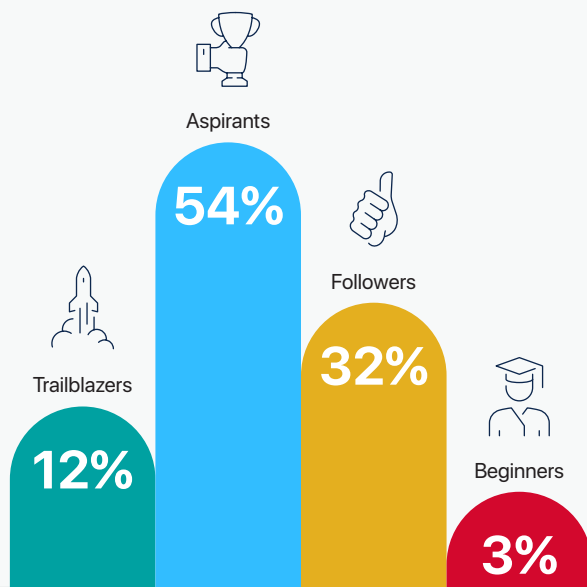
↑80% believe all of the **nine areas of reputation management** we studied **are important**, yet **↓50%** rate their organisation as strong in these.

↑70% **plan to increase investment** in each reputation management area over the next year.

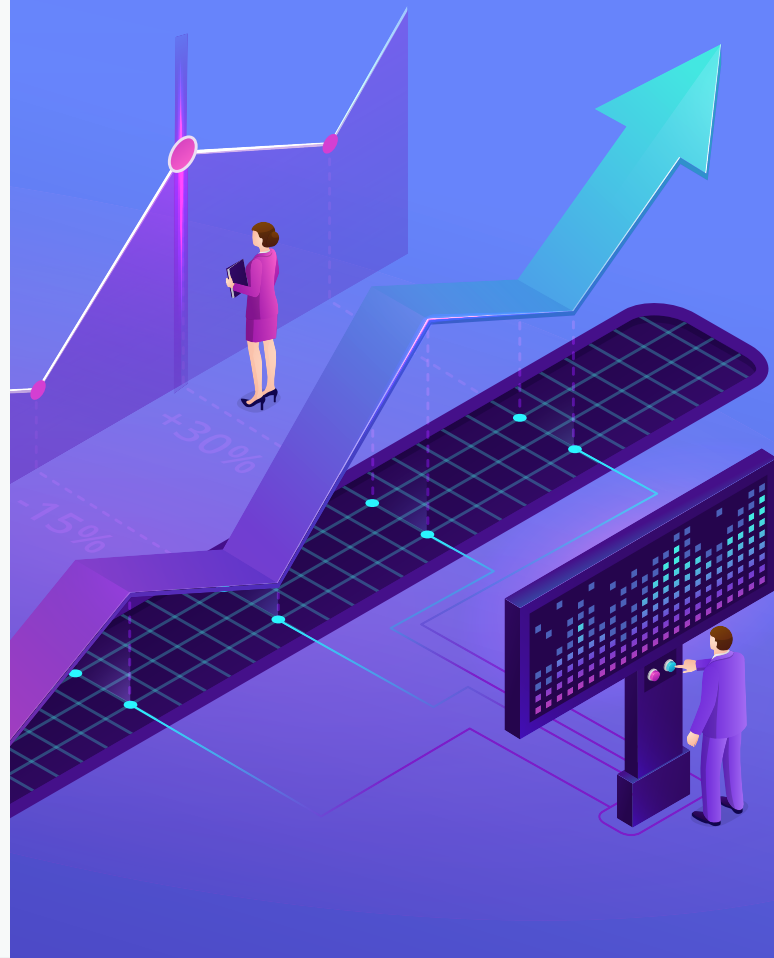
↓50% feel they **receive strong advice** across all areas of reputation management.

Global Reputation Capital Index

- Globally, **12%** are in the top category of **Trailblazers**, with the rest categorised as **Aspirants (54%)**, **Followers (32%)**, **Beginners (3%)**.



- Trailblazers** (75 to 100 points) have a strong grasp of the function and rate their ability to execute on essential tasks highly.
- Aspirants** (50 to 74 points) score highly but inconsistently, trailing Trailblazers in at least one area of the facet in question.
- Followers** (25 to 49 points) have a mixed ability to execute in reputation management, performing some tasks well but others poorly.
- Beginners** (0 to 24 points) lack the basic skills and conceptual knowledge for reputation management and rate their ability to execute as low.



- The **Americas** have the highest portion of Trailblazers and the fewest beginners, with **Europe** having the lowest portion of Trailblazers and highest portion of Beginners.
- The top performing sectors globally are **Travel & Hospitality**, **IT**, **Technology & Telecommunications**, and **Energy**, and the lowest performers are in the **Industrial & Manufacturing**, **Healthcare & Wellness**, and **Transportation**.
- Reputation Strategy** and **Crisis & Issues Management** are the areas of the Index with the highest portion of Trailblazers, with **ESG & Sustainability Strategy**, **Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership**, and **Media Engagement** the lowest.
- Trailblazers** outperform in every category of reputation management, including being **↓25 points** below the global average in negative impacts owing to reputational weaknesses.

Reputation Strategy



↓**50%** have a corporate narrative that is clear, differentiated, compelling, effective, accurate, or that is highly aligned with the organisation's vision, mission, values or purpose.

Just **41%** believe key stakeholders and audiences have high awareness and understanding of their corporate narrative and key messages.

ESG & Sustainability Strategy



↓**50%** have a sustainability or ESG strategy or targets, and only **13%** have a dedicated internal team in this area.

Only **29%** and **12%** respectively have a climate communications strategy and messaging.



Crisis & Issues Management

67% have a crisis & issues management plan, but only 44% are very confident of using it.

Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership



95% say thought leadership activities have been effective in helping to build trust.

88% believe their organisation has clear thought leadership topics and themes, but only **38%** strongly agree that their leaders are recognised as an industry thought leader.

Media Engagement



69% believe they are not engaging with media enough.

While **84%** say media training is effective, only **46%** make it mandatory for all spokespeople. As a result, **74%** believe the quality of their spokespeople could be improved and **66%** say they do not always represent their organisation accurately.

66% believe journalists do not portray their organisations accurately, or treat them fairly at **63%**.



AI & Digital Environment

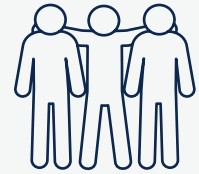


The highest-ranking digital reputation activities for organisations are **SEO optimisation (53%)**, **social media advertising (45%)**, and **content creation (42%)**.

Only **38%** believe they have a strong understanding of how generative AI tools are interacting with and influencing digital content.

80%+ are experiencing a range of digital reputation issues including low search-rankings, misinformation and disinformation, quality control of AI-generated content, and manipulated media and deepfakes.

Employee Communications



Organisations are using multiple different channels (**11.6 on average**) to engage employees, including digital, social, in-person and more.

Only **40%** say their Communications and Human Resources teams are highly aligned around employee engagement strategies.

Only **41%** say their employees have a strong understanding of how their role contributes to the corporate strategy.



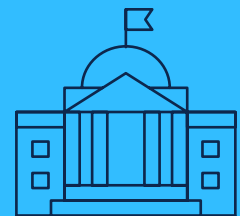
Financial Communications



Only **47%** believe their organisation's value is well understood by investors, and **51%** say they have been highly effective in communicating financial results.

Just **39%** are very satisfied with their performance in capital raising.

Government & Regulatory Affairs



While **97%** have attempted some form for stakeholder mapping, only **43%** have a comprehensive approach.

64% believe their policy engagement activity is insufficient.

75% say a lack of influence and relationships with stakeholders has negatively impacted their business in the past 24 months.



Part One: Reputation landscape in 2024

To provide context for our Global Reputation Capital Index, our research scope also covered the landscape for reputation management more generally. The key findings in this area reveal that while having a strong reputation is universally recognised as important, the operating environment is increasingly complex and fraught with perils, which are having a direct impact on organisations.

Reputation recognised as a key driver of bottom-line value

In an era of increasing demands for transparency, the importance of having a robust reputation has risen up the ranks of corporate agendas globally, with 98% of leaders saying it is 'very important' or 'important' to their organisation's commercial success.

Out of the three groups we interviewed, CEOs, other C-Suite Leaders, and Corporate Affairs Leaders, CEOs

are the most likely to believe that reputation is 'very important' – at 74%, compared with 67% for Corporate Affairs Leaders and 69% for other C-Suite Leaders.

When comparing geographies and industries, significant differences emerge. Those in large emerging markets led by South Africa (95%), Saudi Arabia (90%), Indonesia (88%), Philippines (87%), India (85%), and Brazil (83%), are most likely to see it as 'very important' to commercial success. Those in typically more mature markets in Europe are less likely to indicate this, including Switzerland (51%), Germany (52%), France (56%), Italy (56%), and Spain (57%). South Korea was a low outlier, with only 45% indicating that reputation was 'very important' to commercial success.

When looking at industries – again, significant differences are seen between sectors. IT, Technology & Telecommunication (75%), Education (74%), and Business & Professional Services have the highest percentage of 'very important' ratings, and the Transportation (55%), Healthcare & Wellness (59%), and Food & Agriculture (62%) sectors ranking lowest.

% rating reputation as 'very important and 'important' for commercial success

	Very important	Important		Very important	Important
Global	69%	98%	New Zealand	79%	98%
South Africa	95%	100%	Malaysia	77%	98%
Saudi Arabia	90%	100%	Hong Kong	59%	98%
Indonesia	88%	100%	Canada	73%	97%
Philippines	87%	100%	Australia	67%	97%
United Arab Emirates	75%	100%	Japan	61%	97%
Vietnam	75%	100%	Thailand	71%	96%
United Kingdom	73%	100%	Spain	57%	95%
Singapore	61%	100%	Italy	56%	95%
India	85%	99%	Germany	52%	95%
Taiwan	77%	99%	Switzerland	51%	95%
USA	76%	99%	France	56%	94%
Mainland China	68%	99%	South Korea	45%	94%
Brazil	83%	98%	Netherlands	60%	93%

% rating reputation as 'very important' and 'important' for commercial success



A holistic approach to Reputation Management is needed

Respondents were asked to allocate a percentage share for six pillars of reputation based on how each contribute to an organisation’s overall reputation. While Corporate & Financial Performance and Products & Services have the highest rating for their contributions to reputation by a reasonable margin, the relatively even apportioning across the other pillars points to the need for a holistic approach to reputation management.

Despite Cyber & Data Security ranking as the most important reputation pillar in our reputation research of consumers in 2022, leaders rank it as having the lowest contribution to overall reputation – suggesting a potential disconnect.

Global average % of pillar contribution to overall reputation

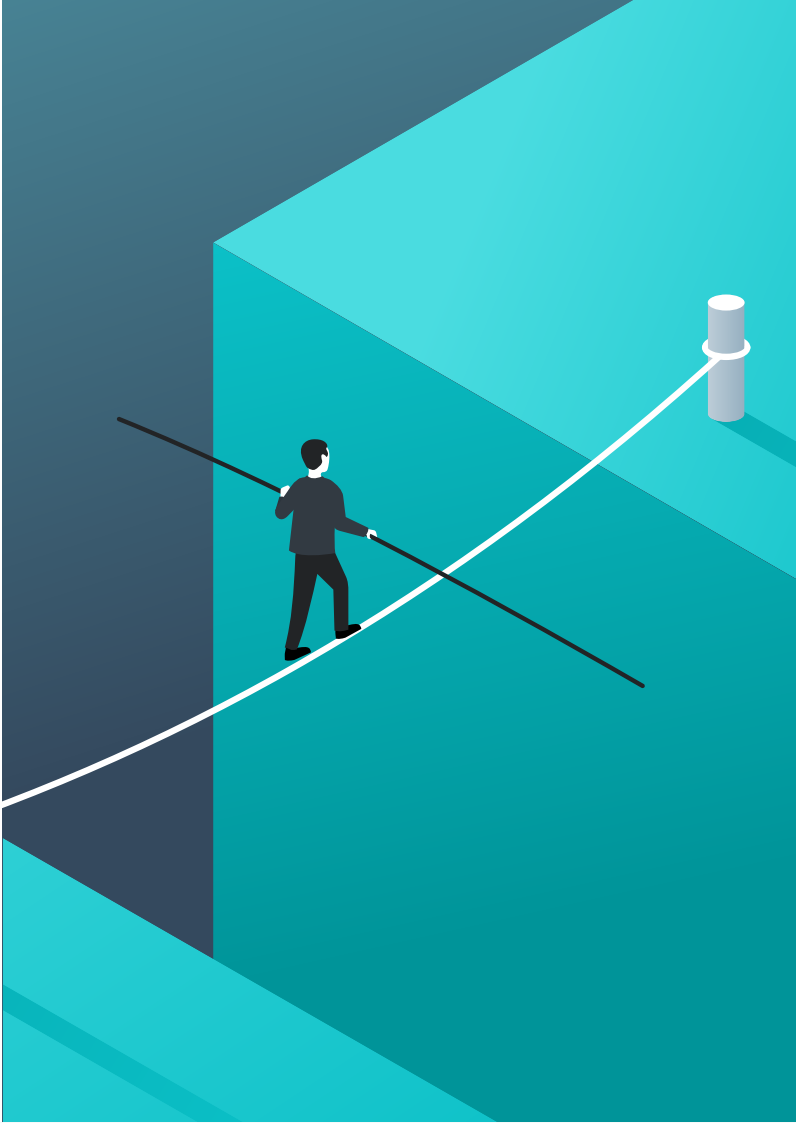
	Corporate & Financial Performance	22%
	Products & Services	21%
	Employee Experience	15%
	Leadership & Governance	15%
	Cyber & Data Security	14%
	Citizenship	13%



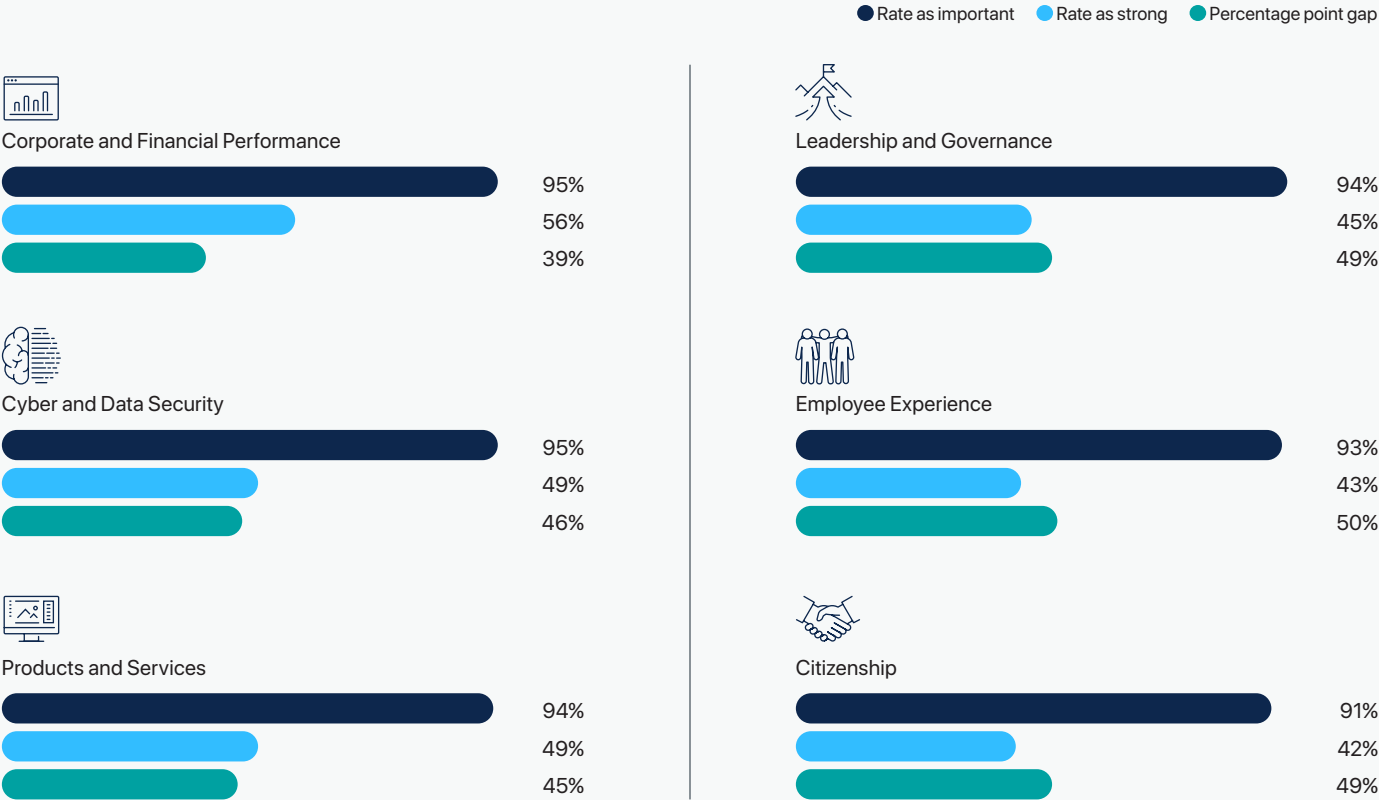
A sentiment to action gap

Multiple areas impact reputation, but our results show leaders prioritising each area differently, and often failing to walk-the-talk when managing reputation. While more than nine out of 10 leaders globally rate all pillars of reputation as important to commercial success, less than half rate their organisations as strong in these areas, excluding Corporate and Financial Performance, which is still relatively low at 56% rating it as strong.

Perhaps as a result of the areas leaders are prioritising, the biggest percentage point gaps between sentiment and strength are seen in the lowest rated pillars of Leadership & Governance, Employee Experience, and Citizenship. This exposes potential risk areas to reputation leaders with their eye off the ball.



% globally rating reputation pillar as important vs strong





Geography matters

With geopolitical issues on the rise globally, nearly nine out of 10 believe that the location of their organisation's headquarters now impacts its reputation. However, these impacts are overwhelmingly viewed as being positive at 88%.

Again, large variations exist by market with those working for Singapore and New Zealand-based companies rating the positive impact of the geographic location of their headquarters highest at 99% and 98% respectively. Those based in Japan and Mainland China rate this the lowest, at 76% and 75% – which is still a significant majority.

Does the geographic location of your headquarters have a positive impact on your reputation?

	Top five markets	Bottom five markets
 Citizenship	Philippines (89%), UAE (85%), Mainland China (85%), Singapore (85%), Saudi Arabia (84%)	South Korea (55%), Japan (65%), Australia (66%), Hong Kong (66%), Germany (67%)
 Cyber & Data Security	Philippines (93%), UAE (92%), Indonesia (92%), South Africa (88%), Mainland China (86%)	Japan (61%), South Korea (67%), Switzerland (71%), Germany (73%), UK (76%)
 Leadership & Governance	Indonesia (90%), UAE (89%), Philippines (89%), India (85%), Mainland China (85%)	Japan (56%), South Korea (61%), Germany (66%), Italy (69%), France (71%)
 Corporate & Financial Performance	Philippines (95%), UAE (92%), Indonesia (90%), Saudi Arabia (90%), India (89%)	Japan (63%), South Korea (68%), France (72%), Switzerland (72%), Germany (74%)
 Products & Services	Philippines (95%), UAE (91%), Vietnam (88%), India (87%), Singapore (87%)	Japan (55%), South Korea (66%), Netherlands (70%), Australia (71%), Germany (72%)
 Employee Experience	UAE (92%), Philippines (85%), India (84%), Thailand (82%), Indonesia (82%)	Japan (66%), Italy (67%), Hong Kong (68%), Australia (69%), Germany (69%)




% geographic location of organisation's headquarters has a positive impact on its reputation

	Overall		Overall
Global	85%	Italy	86%
United Arab Emirates	96%	Spain	86%
Saudi Arabia	96%	Brazil	84%
Singapore	93%	United Kingdom	83%
New Zealand	93%	Canada	83%
Philippines	93%	South Africa	83%
India	92%	Germany	82%
Indonesia	90%	Switzerland	81%
Mainland China	90%	Australia	81%
Malaysia	89%	France	80%
Vietnam	88%	Hong Kong	79%
Thailand	88%	Netherlands	76%
USA	88%	Japan	74%
Taiwan	86%	South Korea	71%

Global % by role for – what level of responsibility do you feel towards your organisations' reputation?

CEOs emerge as Reputation champions

CEOs lead the pack in feeling a high level of personal responsibility for their organisation's reputation at 68%, with the same number believing that reputation performance should be strongly linked to executive remuneration. Again, CEOs based in large emerging markets are more likely to feel high levels of responsibility than those in mature markets – with Indonesia (94%) and Saudi Arabia (93%) the highest, and France (46%) and Germany (37%), the lowest. US CEOs, which are overrepresented in rankings of the world's largest companies, come in above the global average, with 75% feeling high responsibility.

	High	Moderate	Low
 CEOs	67%	30%	3%
 Other C-Suite	43%	52%	4%
 Corporate Affairs leaders	44%	50%	4%

Global % – how strongly do you believe reputation performance should be linked to executive performance and remuneration?

	Strongly	Somewhat	Not linked
 Overall	56%	40%	1%
 CEOs	68%	29%	2%
 Other C-Suite	50%	46%	3%
 Corporate affairs leaders	52%	44%	3%



Meanwhile, by comparison, significantly fewer Corporate Affairs Leaders globally feel the same similarly high levels of personal responsibility of CEOs, at just 44%. Again, significant variances exist by market, with those markets with more CEOs feeling high responsibility for reputation generally more likely to have Corporate Affairs Leaders who feel they have a high responsibility.

With CEOs managing extremely tight diaries and a myriad of corporate targets, this points to a need for corporate affairs teams to be more empowered within organisations.

% by market – CEOs vs Corporate Affairs Leaders who feel a high responsibility for their organisation's reputation

	CEOs – % high responsibility	Corporate Affairs leaders – % high responsibility
Indonesia	94%	74%
Saudi Arabia	93%	77%
India	87%	57%
Vietnam	83%	41%
Brazil	80%	56%
South Africa	77%	46%
Malaysia	76%	32%
Hong Kong	74%	39%
USA	74%	62%
United Arab Emirates	73%	50%
Philippines	71%	57%
Canada	69%	42%
Taiwan	69%	68%
Japan	67%	30%
Spain	67%	30%
Thailand	67%	56%
Switzerland	65%	51%
United Kingdom	64%	23%
South Korea	57%	41%
Australia	57%	56%
Italy	54%	23%
Netherlands	54%	48%
Mainland China	53%	33%
New Zealand	50%	21%
Singapore	47%	30%
France	46%	37%
Germany	37%	23%

Audiences insights are crucial

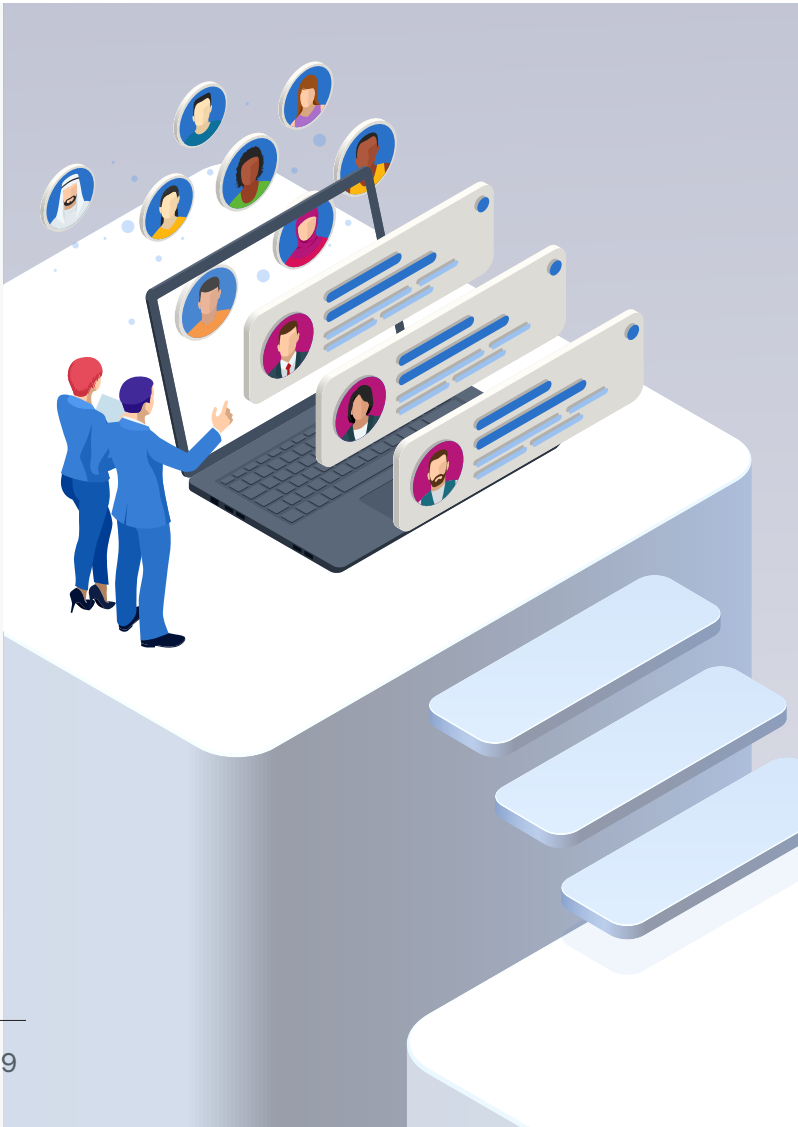
Any reputation strategy should be built around the key audiences or stakeholders you aim to engage – what would you like them to think, feel, and ultimately do? An organisation’s ability to achieve its reputation goals depends on how well it understands them and how effectively it can engage and influence them and form aligned goals and expectations.

For many businesses, customers are the most important stakeholder group influencing their business strategy, yet our study finds organisations are not wholeheartedly confident in their ability to understand and influence them. For example, only 44% of leaders rate their insights into customers as ‘strong’, with a further 46% rating them as ‘moderate’. Only 43% of business leaders report a strong ability to influence customers, with only 40% feeling strongly that their reputation is well aligned with customers’ expectations.

The same trend is seen across other audience and stakeholder groups, with less than half having access to strong insights for any other stakeholder group, including Government & Regulators, Employees and Investors & Shareholders, with the lowest being NGOs and Media. These results reflect an acute need for organisations to understand the broad environment in which they operate, and also provides an indication of how audiences are being prioritised. Even among Corporate Affairs Leaders, only 35% report having strong media insights, leaving a majority of respondents in need of support in this area.

% globally with strong access to insights by audience and stakeholder group

Employees	46%
Customers	44%
Government / Regulators	42%
Investors / Shareholders	38%
Community	36%
Online Influencers	35%
Media	34%
NGOs	32%



Proving the importance of audience and stakeholder insights, among our respondents, a wide gulf emerges between those who rate their insights into individual audience groups as 'strong', and those who rate them as 'moderate', or 'weak', or lacking altogether and comparing this with their ability to influence them. This is consistent across all six audience categories, demonstrating that audience knowledge is a critical driver of influence.

Similarly, the same strong correlation is seen between access to insights and being able to align an organisation's reputation with its audiences expectations.



Global % – access to insights vs level of influence

	% strong access to insights and strong influence	Moderate access to insights and strong influence	Weak access to insights and strong influence	No access to insights and strong influence
Government / Regulators	72%	23%	12%	13%
Customers	62%	30%	20%	11%
Employees	59%	34%	23%	24%
Media	52%	26%	16%	10%
Online Influencers	54%	31%	17%	12%
Investors / Shareholders	57%	30%	17%	12%
Community	60%	32%	17%	10%
NGOs	52%	24%	11%	8%

Global % – access to insights vs reputation expectations alignment

	Strong access to audience insights	Strong resourcing to engage audiences	Feel strong ability to influence this audience	Reputation strongly aligned with audience expectations
Government / Regulators	42%	44%	42%	44%
Customers	44%	44%	43%	40%
Employees	46%	46%	44%	42%
Media	34%	35%	33%	35%
Online Influencers	35%	35%	35%	36%
Investors / Shareholders	38%	37%	38%	38%
Community	36%	38%	41%	38%
NGOs	32%	34%	39%	33%





Part Two: Global Reputation Capital Index

Benchmarking performance in Reputation Management

The Sandpiper Reputation Capital Index is based on the information shared by business leaders around nearly 50 variables across the nine areas of reputation management that we analysed: **Reputation Strategy, ESG & Sustainability Strategy, Crisis & Issues Management, Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership, Media Engagement, AI & Digital Environment, Employee Communications, Financial Communications, and Government & Regulatory Affairs.**

Based on the scoring for each area, respondent organisations are categorised into four groups:

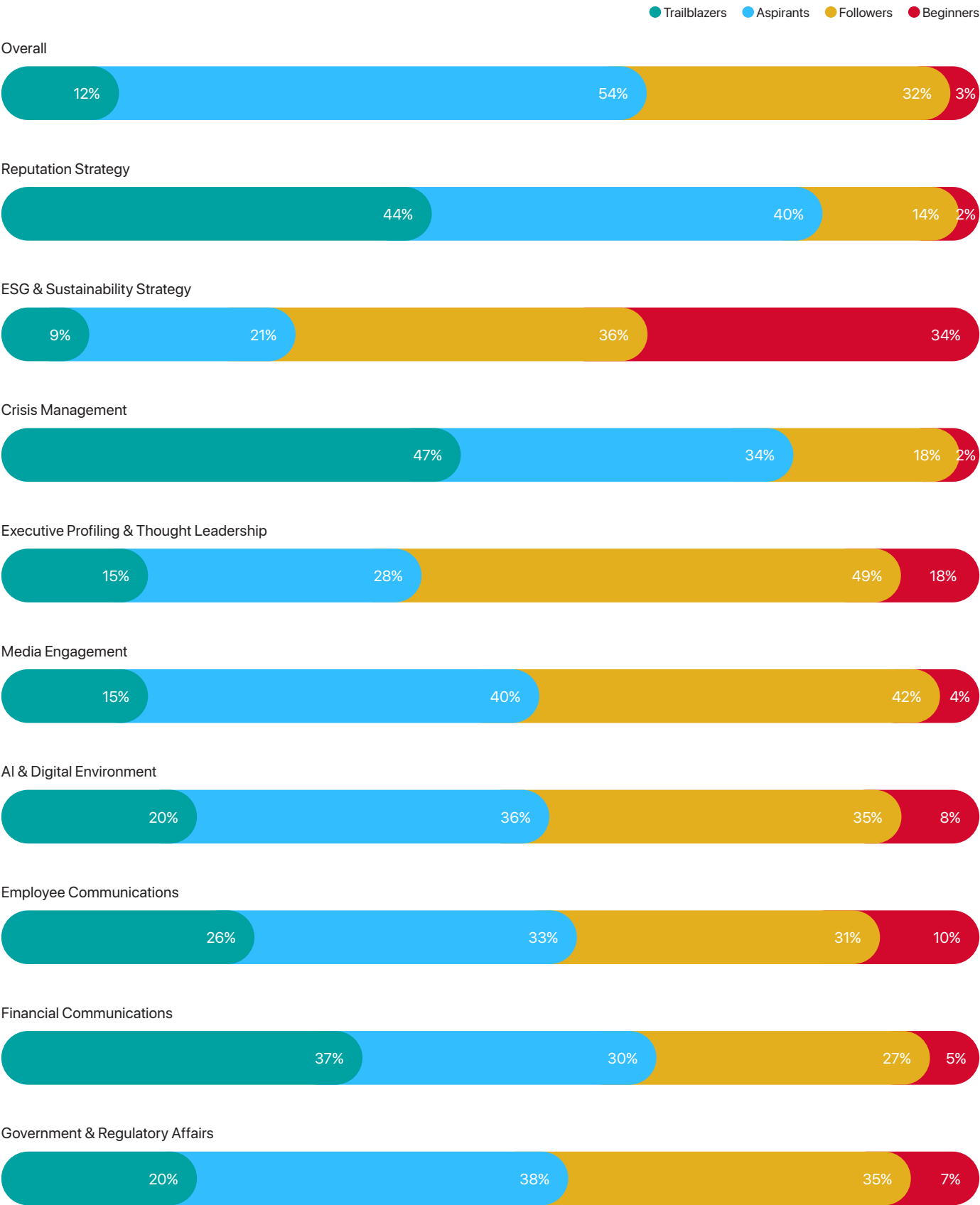
- **Trailblazers** (75 to 100 points) have a strong grasp of the function and rate their ability to execute on essential tasks highly.
- **Aspirants** (50 to 74 points) score highly but inconsistently, trailing Trailblazers in at least one area of the facet in question.
- **Followers** (25 to 49 points) have a mixed ability to execute in reputation management, performing some tasks well but others poorly.
- **Beginners** (0 to 24 points) lack the basic skills and conceptual knowledge for reputation management and rate their ability to execute as low.

The data from our Global Reputation Capital Index provides a fascinating window into how organisations' headquartered across 27 markets and six continents are performing in reputation management.

Overall, when applying our methodology only a small subset of organisations (12%) perform consistently well across all of the nine areas of reputation management we assess and are categorised as Trailblazers. Much more commonly, respondents rate some areas highly, while others are still in development. This means most fall into the Aspirants (54%) or Followers (32%) categories. Only 3% of respondents score poorly in nearly all areas of reputation management and are therefore rated as Beginners.

The highest performing areas are those connected with strategy and risk management – with the most Trailblazers in Crisis & Issues Management (47%), and Reputation Strategy (44%). However, in the same vein, performance in ESG & Sustainability Strategy has by far the fewest Trailblazers at 9%, followed by Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership and Media Engagement, both at 15% – suggesting that organisations are not sufficiently investing in public profiling efforts.

% in each performance category by category

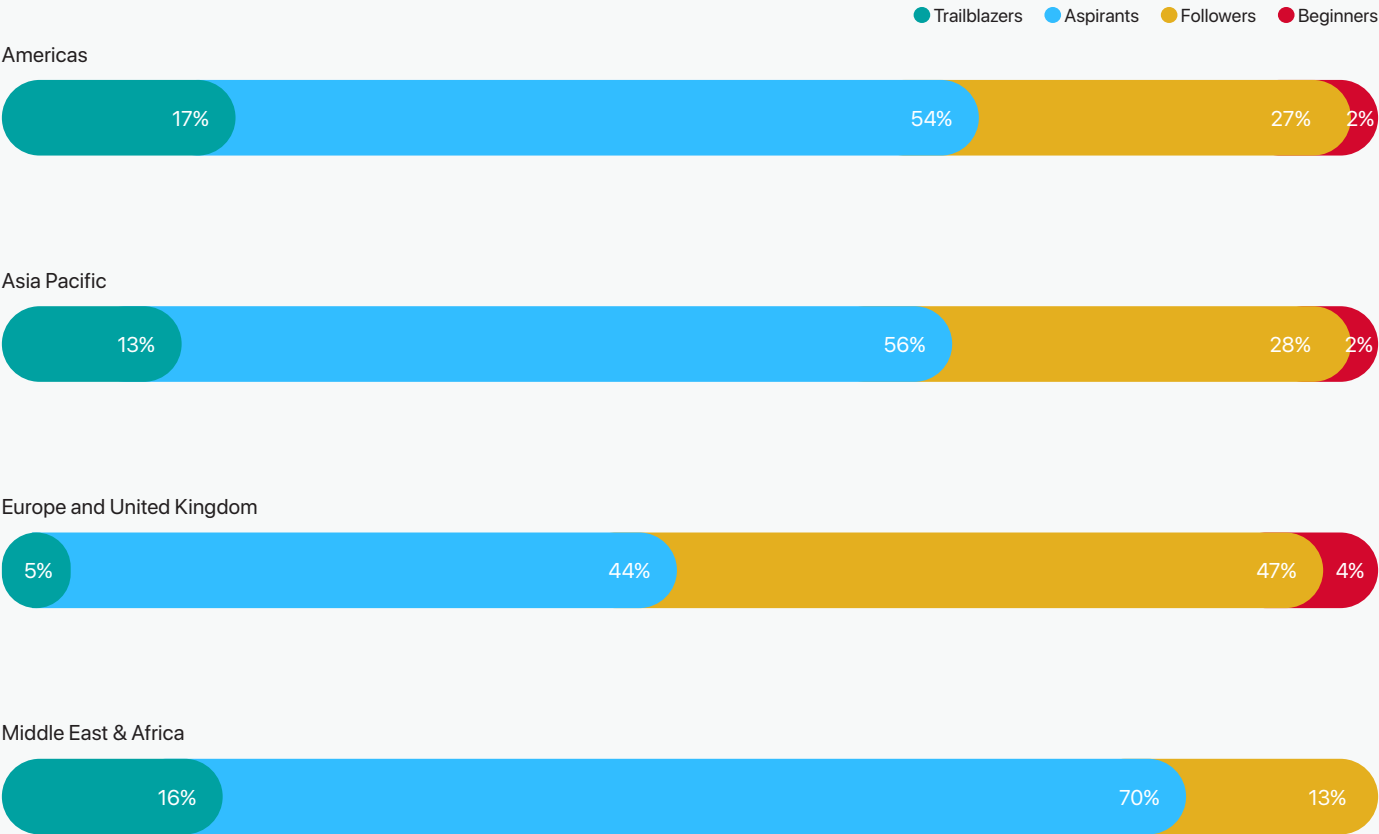


Regional performance varies. The **Americas** and **Middle East and Africa** have the highest percentage of Trailblazers and fewest Beginners. The most highly rated area of reputation management is Reputation Strategy, where the Americas outpace the global average by more than 3 points. In addition, Financial Communications is a highlight for the **Americas**, outpacing the global average by nearly 4 points. Given the number of companies listing on exchanges based in New York, financial communications strategy will continually be a focus, specifically for the US.

The **Middle East and Africa** region also ranks the highest for Reputation Strategy, Financial Communications, Crisis & Issues Management, and Employee Communications. In each case, its' scores exceed the global average by nearly 10 points. The Middle East and Africa score for Government & Regulatory Affairs is also the highest in the world, exceeding the global average by nearly 9 points, which may be a reflection of in-region requirements.



% in each performance category by region



In contrast, **Europe and the United Kingdom** has the widest distribution of scores, with 91% clustering in the Aspirants and Followers categories. ESG & Sustainability Strategy is rated the lowest, at nearly 9 points below the global average. It is likely that leaders and communicators did not rate their capabilities as strongly as those in other markets due to higher requirements in EU markets for reporting and governance around ESG. In addition, Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership trails other markets significantly at 40.31 out of 100, ~7 points lower than the global average. In contrast to the rise of celebrity CEOs in other markets, the EU appears to maintain a higher level of separation between executive personalities and the organisations they lead.

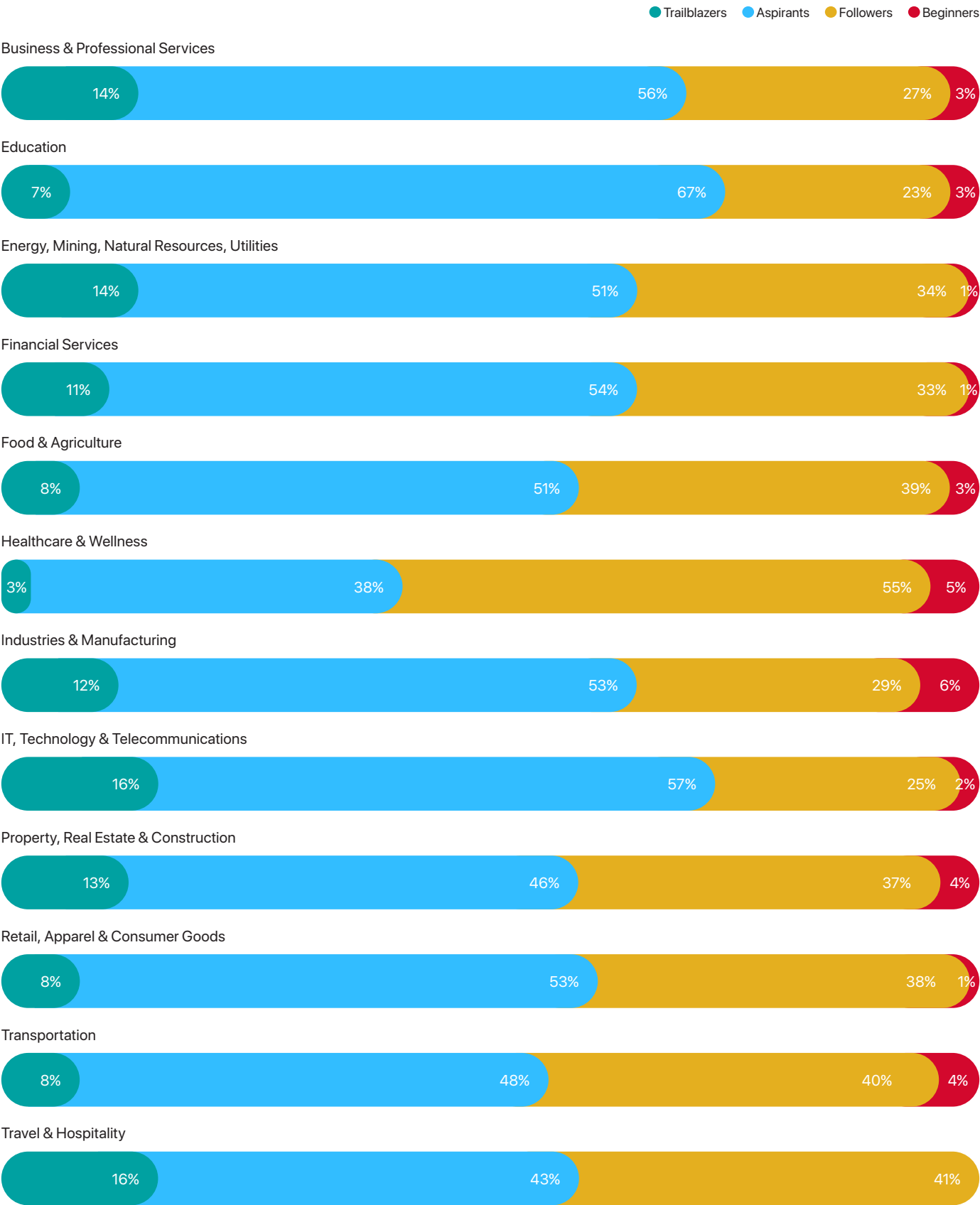
For **Asia Pacific**, a high proportion of Aspirants is paired with low levels of Beginners. Asia Pacific's biggest overperformance is in ESG & Sustainability Strategy, where it exceeds the global average by nearly 3.5 points.

Given the region's significant exposure to the realities of climate change, its organisations have had a steep learning curve to communicate effectively about their impact on the environment. ESG and sustainability are naturally top of mind for local populations, which is reflected in the prioritisation organisations now give to these issues. Other areas where the Asia Pacific region excels are Crisis & Issues Management (+2 points), AI & Digital Environment (+1.5 points), and Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership (+1.5 points).

The top three performing sectors according to our Index are **Travel & Hospitality** (16% Trailblazers), **IT, Technology & Telecommunications** (16%), and **Energy, Mining, Natural Resources, Utilities** (14%). In contrast, the industries with the most Beginners include **Industries & Manufacturing** (6%), **Healthcare & Wellness** (5%), and **Transportation** (4%).



% in each performance category by industry



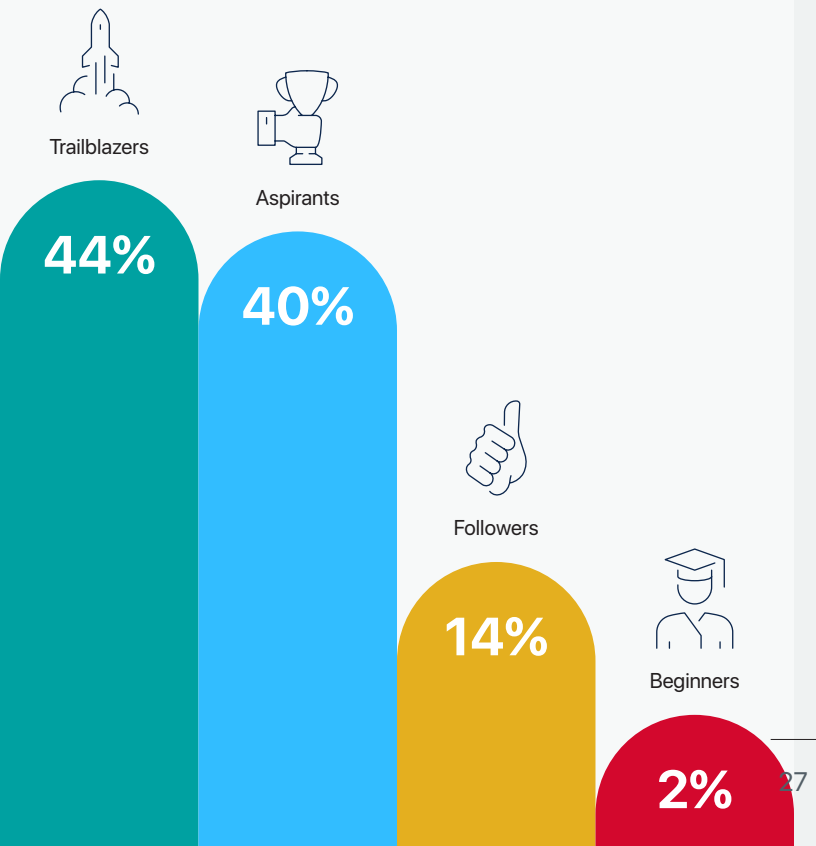
Reputation Strategy –

The importance of insights, planning, and measurement

Performance in the area of Reputation Strategy according to our Index is assessed based on having a reputation strategy with a clear owner in place, ensuring strong alignment of that strategy with the organisation’s objectives, and having effective measurement tools.

Applying this framework, around four out of 10 (44%) of respondents’ organisations globally qualify as Trailblazers, the second highest of any area, with 54% categorised as Aspirants or Followers, and only 2% as Beginners. Stronger performance here is likely linked to 90% of respondents believing in the importance of having a reputation management strategy, with 55% of CEOs seeing this as very important.

Global % by category for Reputation Strategy



Criteria	Weighting
Reputation strategy in place	15%
Clear owner of reputation strategy	15%
Alignment of brand positioning and narrative with vision statement, mission statement, company values, and company purpose	25%
Effectiveness of measurement of reputation	25%
Access to audience insights	20%

90%

Reputation Strategy is important

43%

Our organisation is strong in Reputation Strategy

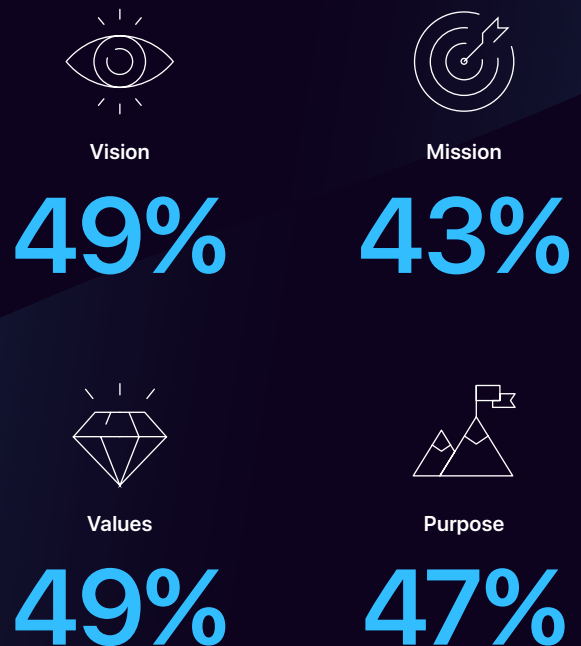
80%

Reputation Strategy has a clear strategy and owner

Overall, four in five (82%) leaders indicate that their organisation has a reputation management strategy in place. Almost all (95%) say their strategies have a clear owner, although ownership differs by organisation, but is most commonly the CEO (41%), or Communications Lead (37%), with Marketing Leads coming in a distant third (14%).

However, despite most having a reputation management strategy in place, many fall down in the alignment of these strategies with key business objectives. Less than half globally say that their corporate brand positioning and narrative and messaging is highly aligned with their organisation's vision, mission, values, or purpose.

Global % alignment of corporate brand, narrative, and messaging with key corporate communications



% owning reputation strategy by market

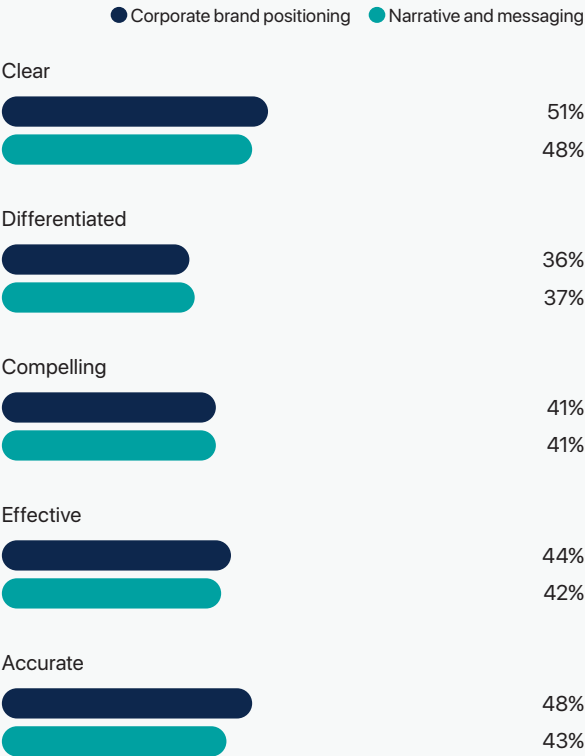
	Global	Americas	APAC	Europe	Middle East & Africa
CEO	41%	53%	41%	30%	54%
Head of Communications / Corporate Affairs	37%	27%	39%	41%	30%
Head of Marketing / CMO	14%	11%	12%	20%	9%
It is our General Counsel	3%	4%	2%	5%	2%
Shared responsibility – no clear owner	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%
No clear owner	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%

Additionally, similar numbers do not feel their corporate brand positioning or narrative messaging is clear, differentiated, compelling, effective or even highly accurate.

Unsurprisingly as a result, only 41% believe their key stakeholders and audiences have a high level of awareness and understanding of their organisation’s narrative and key messages, with 48% saying they have only a moderate understanding.

Our Index-based analysis further showcases just how much a strong strategy can influence other aspects of reputation. Trailblazers in reputation management strategy are between 11% and 19% more effective in all other aspects of reputation management.

Global % rating corporate brand positioning, narrative and messaging for possessing key attributes



The largest difference is in relation to reputation measurement, where Trailblazers score a 21-point lead. Strategy and measurement are inextricably linked, as strategy requires measurement to inform what is working and what is not, as well as to highlight gaps and opportunities.

Overall, leaders recognise the need to measure reputation, with 86% seeing it as very or moderately important. The larger their company, the more likely they are to indicate this. Most leaders report they are planning to invest more time and resources in reputation measurement, with 77% anticipating some increase and 23% planning a large increase.

Companies value a wide variety of tools to measure their reputation, with seven in ten leaders using customer reviews, media coverage and digital analytics tools, and finding them effective.



This is also true of direct perceptions research, including surveys and focus groups. There is strong confidence in brand awareness and perception surveys among leaders, with 69% of those using these tools and viewing them as effective. Only 5% say they are not effective.

Trailblazers in Reputation Management Strategy also lead by 19 points in financial reporting and results and 19 points in ESG and sustainability performance and communications.

Global % rating measurement methodologies as effective

	Highly effective
Customer reviews and feedback analysis	76%
Stakeholder reputation surveys	74%
Stakeholder mapping	73%
Digital and/or social media analytics (incl. social listening)	72%
Employee engagement surveys	72%
Brand awareness and perception surveys	69%
Media coverage analysis	69%
Media monitoring	69%
Focus groups	67%



Global % strong performance by reputation management area

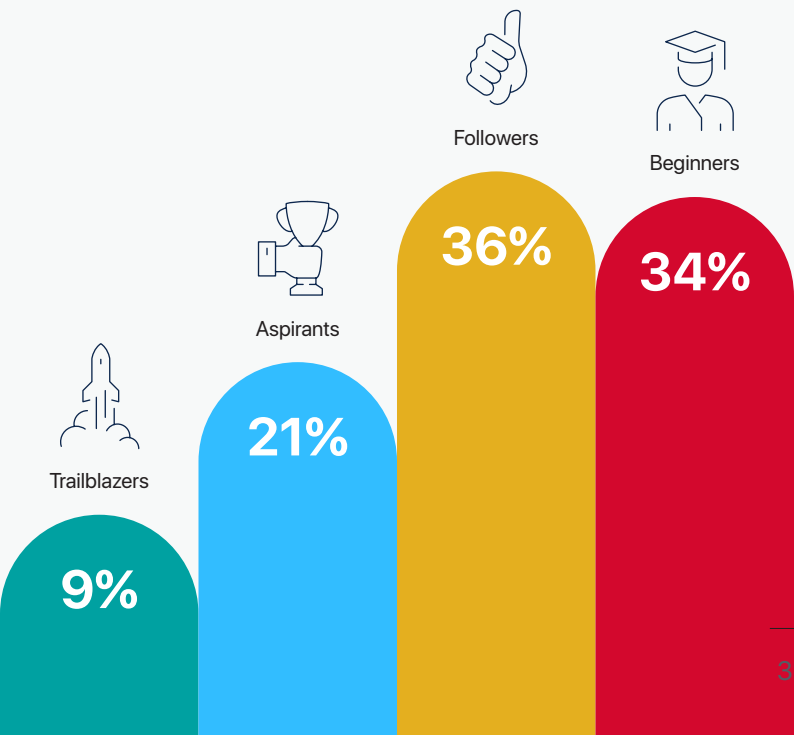
	All respondents	Reputation Management strategy Trailblazers	Point increase
Reputation management strategy	48%	73%	+25
CEO profile	42%	57%	+15
Executive / leadership team profile	44%	61%	+17
Media profile and relationships	35%	47%	+12
Government and regulator relationships	39%	56%	+17
NGO relationships	33%	47%	+14
Community engagement	38%	54%	+17
Digital footprint and profile	38%	53%	+15
(generative) AI integration	39%	53%	+16
Employee engagement / sentiment	39%	55%	+16
ESG and sustainability performance and communications	39%	58%	+19
Crisis and issues communications preparedness	39%	54%	+15
Financial reporting / results	46%	65%	+19
Investor / shareholder relations	42%	58%	+16
Reputation measurement	43%	64%	+21

ESG & Sustainability Strategy – *Doing well by doing good*

ESG & Sustainability Strategy is recognised as important by the vast majority the leaders surveyed at 83%. Despite this, many respondents' organisations are lacking the basic fundamentals for success, with just 39% rating their organisations as strong in this area.

Therefore unsurprisingly, applying our Index methodology, only 9% qualify as Trailblazers in this area – with most being rated as Followers at 36% and Beginners at 34% – the highest percentage of Beginners in any area.

Global % by category for ESG & Sustainability Strategy



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
ESG targets in place	11.7%
Regular reporting on ESG and sustainability performance	11.7%
Regular tracking in place for ESG and sustainability targets	11.7%
ESG & Sustainability Communications assets in place	25%
Climate Communications plan and messaging in place	15%

83%

ESG & Sustainability Strategy are important

39%

Our organisation is strong in ESG & Sustainability Strategy

53%

ESG & Sustainability Strategy has a clear strategy and owner

Multiple weak spots exist. Starting at the pointy end, less than half of respondent organisations have a sustainability and/or ESG strategy or targets; only 44% are regularly producing any form of sustainability and/or ESG reporting at least annually; and only 13% have a dedicated sustainability and/or ESG team or working group internally.

Looking more specifically at sustainability and ESG communications, while half (50%) have spokespeople specifically trained in this area, only 43% have devised a specific sustainability narrative and messaging, and fewer have robust positioning materials to support this.

The perceived quality of their ESG and sustainability communications is also an issue. The majority do not feel these are highly clear (48%), accurate (43%) effective (41%), compelling (40%), or differentiated (32%). As a result, only 37% say their key stakeholders have a high level of awareness and understanding around their sustainability initiatives.

Global % implemented

Sustainability and/or ESG targets

49%

Sustainability and/or ESG strategy

47%

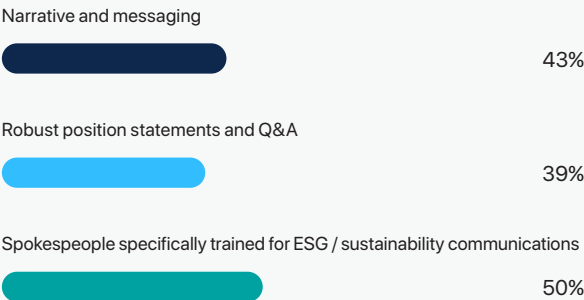
Regular sustainability and/or ESG reporting, at least annually

44%

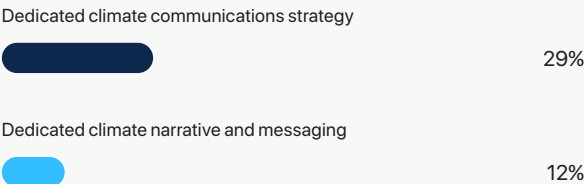
Dedicated sustainability and/or ESG team

13%

Global % implemented key sustainability and/or ESG communications



Global % implemented climate communications



As a subset of overall sustainability and ESG communications preparedness, climate communications is faring extremely poorly, with only 29% having established a climate communications strategy and narrative at 12%.

As we approach the mid-point of the decade of action most are also failing to ensure their sustainability and ESG communications are aligned with global agendas – with only 45% of respondents’ organisations ensuring their sustainability strategies are strongly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

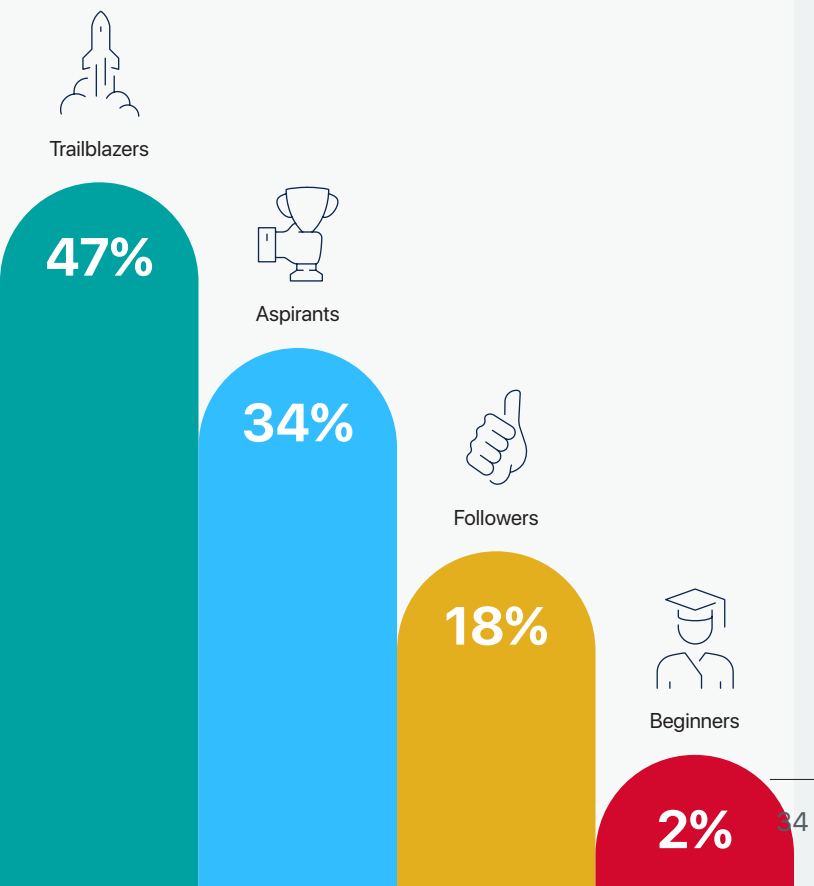
Crisis Management – *Preparedness pays off*

For the purposes of this Index, performance in Crisis & Issues management is assessed based on having a clear crisis & issues communications strategy and plan with a clear owner, running regular training and simulations, and having confidence to activate plans.

Based on this approach, nearly half of respondent organisations are categorised as Trailblazers at 47% – making this the strongest area of reputation management.

This result is underpinned by findings that over two-thirds (67%) of respondents’ organisations globally have a crisis & issues communications plan in place, and 74% are conducting training and simulations to test their activation and response plans at least on a quarterly basis.

Global % by category for Crisis Management



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Crisis communications plan in place	25%
Frequent crisis and issues communications tests and training	25%
Confidence in activation of crisis and issues communications plan	25%



The findings show that greater preparedness is paying off in mitigating potential issues, with Trailblazers in the area of Crisis & Issues Management experiencing significantly fewer negative business impacts over the past 12 months than Aspirants, Followers, or Beginners. While nearly three quarters (72%) of all survey respondents experienced at least one negative reputational impact over the past 12 months, only 66% of Trailblazers in this area did.

However, despite these overall positive results, some challenges remain with only 44% saying they are highly confident in using their crisis & issues communications plan. CEOs are the most prepared, with 53% highly confident, followed by Corporate Affairs Leaders (43%) and other C-Suite Leaders (38%). This points to the need for a disciplined approach to ongoing preparedness efforts that includes the broader management team.

Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership –

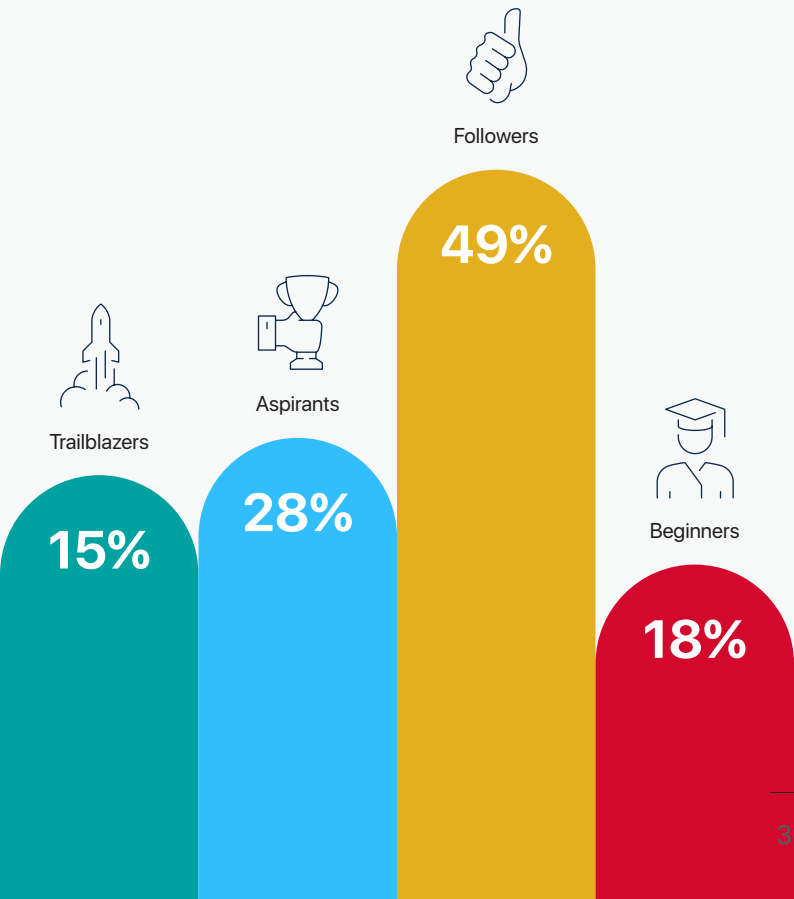
Consistent positioning and persistence yields results

Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership reflects how effectively an organisation and its leadership communicates its viewpoints, engages with industry conversations, and maintains visibility across key channels.

Over two thirds of respondents (67%) are Followers or Beginners in this critical pillar, with just 15% categorised as Trailblazers – the second lowest alongside Media Engagement.

Despite this being one of the lower performing areas of the Index, there is a clear appetite to do more.

Global % by category for Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Clear thought leadership topics the CEO associates with	12.5%
Clear thought leadership topics the industry associates with	12.5%
Frequency of thought leadership activities	25%
Activity across social media platforms and other channels	25%

86%

Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership is important

44%

Our organisation is strong in Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership

53%

Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership has a clear strategy and owner

Leaders report that executive profiling and thought leadership investments have been effective in helping with a range of business challenges, particularly building trust and awareness with key audiences and stakeholders, fostering pride among employees, managing misinformation and disinformation, providing reassurance in the sales process and balancing industry narratives, and engaging existing and prospective customers.

Global % rating executive profiling and thought leadership activities as effective in key areas

Building brand or product trust with key audiences and stakeholders	95%
Building brand or product awareness with key audiences and stakeholders	91%
Engaging existing clients	87%
Engaging prospective clients	86%
Engaging and building trust with government / regulators	86%
Building pride with employees	89%
Providing reassurance during the sales process	87%
Helping to balance important industry narratives	87%
Managing misinformation / disinformation	89%

Global % rating selected thought leadership activities as effective



When looking specifically at common forms of executive profiling and thought leadership activities, this sentiment continues, with the overwhelming majority believing all of these can be effective – particularly company reports and whitepapers.

However, this enthusiasm is not always being reflected in frequency, with around half of respondents’ organisations only participating in these on average once or twice a year. In an increasingly digital communications environment with a voracious appetite for content, the current frequency is increasingly insufficient as only 60% of organisations currently share executive and digital content on social platforms quarterly, at most.

However, despite lower levels of activity, our findings show that most are exercising campaign-based thinking in this area, with over two-thirds (68%) focused on executing at least three thought leadership-based campaigns per year, and 93% saying they have dedicated online thought leadership portals. Further to this, 88% and 85% respectively believe that their organisations and CEOs are clear on the thought leadership themes and topics they should be associated with.

The most highly used social media channels globally for promoting executive profiling and thought leadership content as rated by our respondents' organisations are LinkedIn at 92%, Facebook at 91%, and X at 90%.



Global % average frequency of selected thought leadership activities

	Reports / whitepapers	Editorial / byline articles in media	Events / speaking opportunities	Participation in working groups	Social media content
Annually or biannually	50%	47%	40%	42%	37%
Quarterly	28%	26%	31%	28%	23%
Monthly	14%	18%	20%	20%	19%
Weekly	5%	7%	8%	7%	14%
Daily	3%	3%	2%	2%	6%

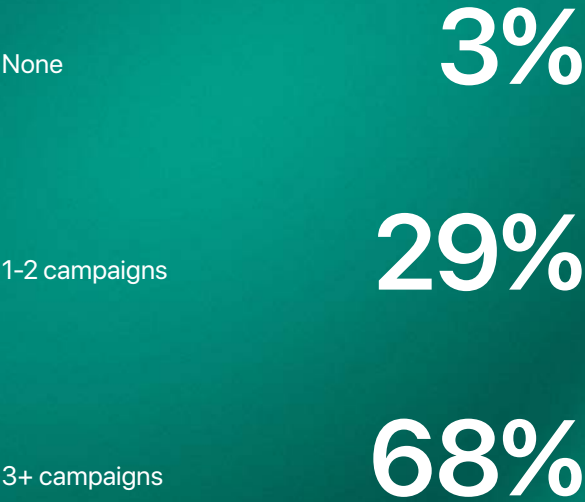
These results are underscored by a feeling that not enough time and resources are being invested in this area – with 73% saying their organisations are not investing enough. At an individual level, 85% and 75% respectively believe the CEO and their broader Executive teams should be spending more time on this.

As a result, only 38% and 36% strongly believe that their CEOs and organisations are well recognised as industry thought leaders. Trailblazers in this area are significantly more likely to have achieved this than others.

Global % overall vs Trailblazers in recognition for industry thought leadership



Global % number of thought leadership campaigns per year



Media Engagement –

Bridging the media engagement gap

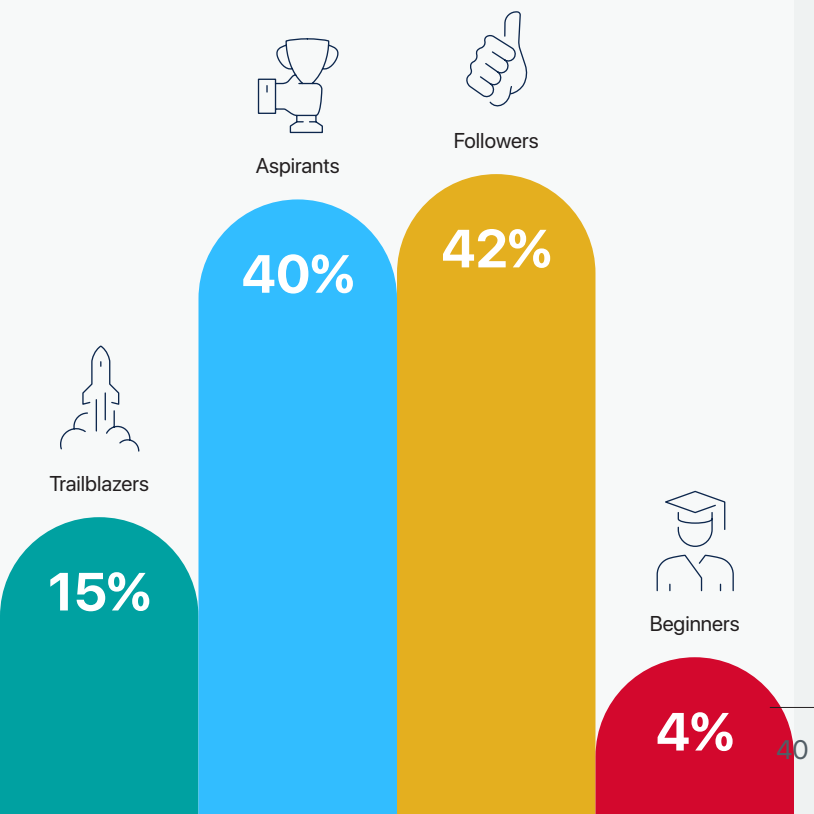
Media Engagement assesses an organisation’s ability to manage a clear media strategy, and maintain strong media relationships and positioning.

As with thought leadership, there is a wide gap between intentions and performance. 83% of respondents say their organisations’ media profile and relationships are important, but just 35% rate their performance as very strong in this area.

According to our Index, 82% are categorised in the middle two categories of Aspirants and Followers, with just 15% Trailblazers and 4% Beginners.

Respondents recognise the need to do more. While just over two thirds (67%) say they have comprehensively mapped media stakeholders, 69% say their organisations are not engaging enough with the media.

Global % by category for Media Engagement



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Well maintained media map	10%
Media trained spokespeople	10%
Frequency of media engagement	15%
Policy on media training	18%
Views on poor media engagement	22%

83%

Media Engagement is important

35%

Our organisation is strong in Media Engagement

37%

Media Engagement has a clear strategy and owner

In terms of media representatives, 60% of respondents' organisations have between 3-6 approved spokespeople in their corporate headquarters – with variations by company size and industry.

Looking at frequency of media engagement, Global CEOs emerge as the most prominent corporate spokespeople, followed by other C-suite executives, internal experts, and local market leaders. Across all roles most tend to engage on average on a quarterly or monthly basis with media, with typically less than a quarter engaging weekly or daily.

Investments in this area and training are recognised as having clear benefits, with the vast majority (84%) of those with access to media training viewing it as effective. However, less than half (46%) of those surveyed say media training is mandatory for all spokespeople in their organisation before they participate in media engagements – a further 42% only make training mandatory for those participating in broadcast interviews.

This is showing in results, with nearly three quarters (74%) saying the quality of their spokespeople could be improved (74%), and that local spokespeople are not receiving enough support (72%). Further to this, 66% say their spokespeople do not always represent their organisations accurately.

In further evidence of the need to improve relationships here, 66% believe that journalists do not portray their organisation or industry activities correctly, and 63% feel they are not treated fairly by media. Trailblazers in this area again outperform these averages significantly – proving the importance of strong media engagement practices to effective control organisational narratives.

Global % frequency of spokespeople by role engaging with media on average

	Global CEO	Other global C-Suite	Internal experts	Local market leadership team
Annually	23%	15%	13%	12%
Quarterly	33%	30%	27%	28%
Monthly	26%	28%	30%	28%
Weekly	11%	16%	16%	19%
Daily	4%	6%	7%	7%

Global % overall vs Trailblazers in media relations performance aspects

	Average	Trailblazers
I don't believe my organisation's activities are portrayed correctly in the media	66%	40%
I feel that journalists do not treat my organisation fairly	63%	41%
I feel that journalists do not understand the industry my organisation operates in	66%	43%

AI & Digital Environment –

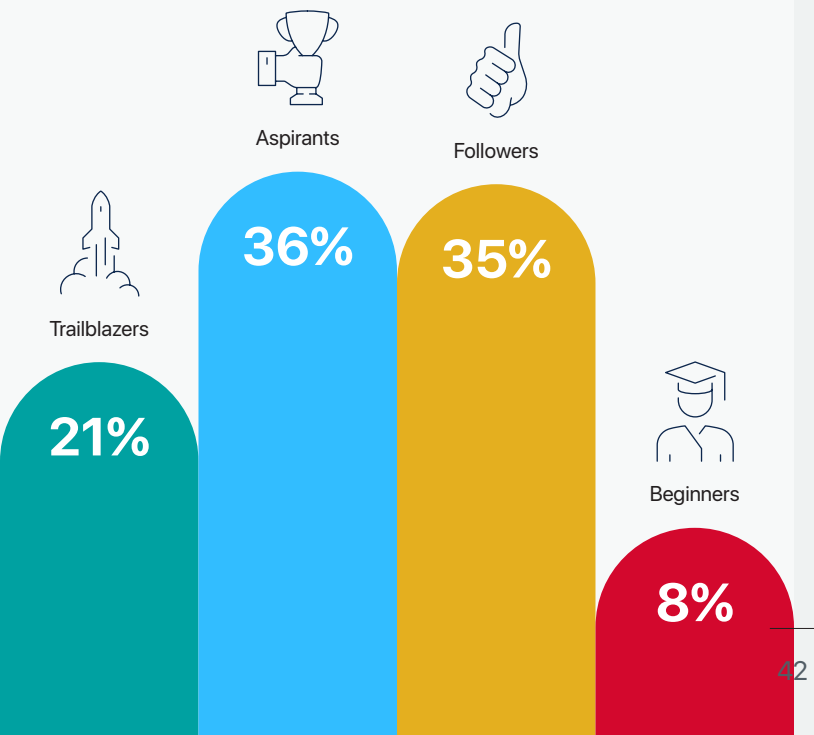
Rapid change drives a need for clear ownership, and more consistency in tactics

Performance in the area of AI & Digital Environment is assessed based on having a clear digital communications strategy in place, having to support engagement through digital tactics, understanding AI when integrating and prioritising digital information and content, and having an executive team with strong channel knowledge.

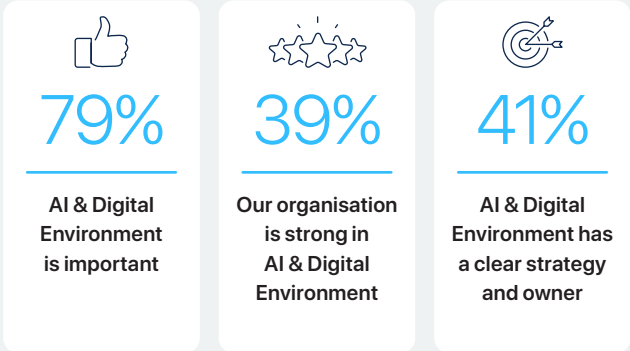
Based on this approach, 20% of respondents’ organisations are categorised as Trailblazers, with the majority (71%) as Aspirants or Followers and only 8% are Beginners.

This echoes the fact that while most (79%) find AI & Digital Environment to be important, less than half have a clear owner and strategy (41%) and even fewer feel that they are strong in the area (39%). A lack of ownership plays a role in the strength of performance in this area.

Global % by category for AI & Digital Environment



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Ability of digital activities to support digital engagement	25%
Understanding of AI with integrating and prioritising digital information and content	25%
Executive team’s channel knowledge	25%



Digital activities to support engagement varied widely. Activities such as search engine optimisation (SEO) are employed by over half (53%) of leaders, and regular social media monitoring and listening is in place for only 16%.

Trailblazers again perform much better across a variety of digital reputation issues. Quality control of AI content sees Trailblazers performing 13 points better than the average, while Trailblazers also perform 11 points better in data privacy and security.

In contrast, executive teams' knowledge of social channels and usage of these channels is high, with the majority (53%) claiming both knowledge and usage of channels. Only 4% of leaders say their Executive teams lack both knowledge of channels and lack engagement.

Leaders are planning to invest heavily in this area as it continues to evolve, though. Three quarters (75%) of leaders plan to invest in their digital footprint and profile over the next 12 months, while 76% also plan to invest in generative AI capabilities.



Global % managing digital reputation issues well vs AI & Digital Environment Index performance

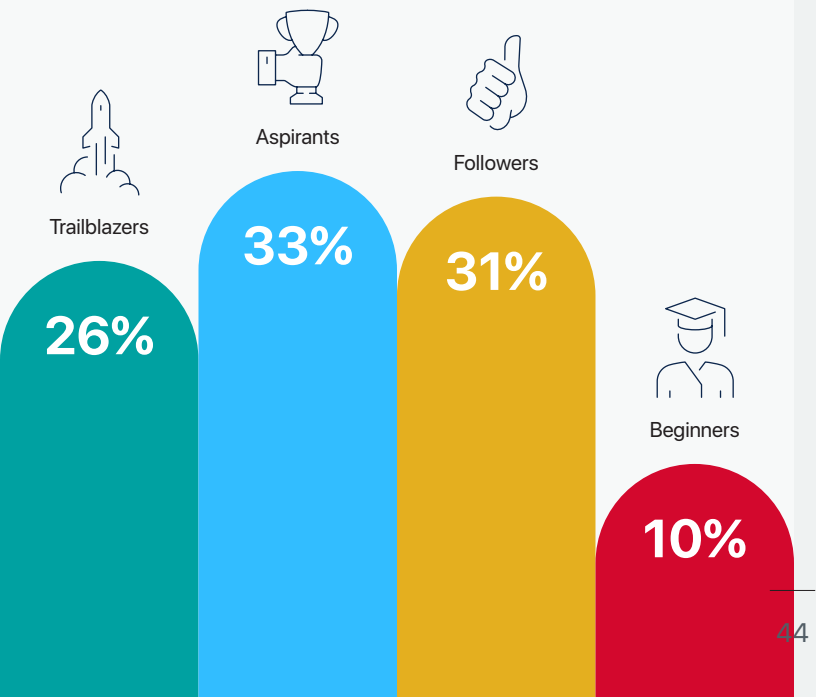
	Overall	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Low awareness / search rankings	74%	80%	83%	70%	38%
Misinformation and disinformation	71%	78%	76%	66%	47%
Quality control of AI-generated content	67%	80%	73%	60%	35%
Data privacy and security	71%	82%	76%	64%	45%
Manipulated media and deepfakes	66%	74%	72%	61%	39%
Intellectual property and compliance issues	69%	76%	75%	63%	46%
Loss of human touch	67%	70%	73%	64%	47%

Employee Communications – *Moving from direction to engagement*

Employee Communications is seen as critical to overall reputational management performance, with 85% of business leaders rating it as an important factor. However, there is clear room for improvement. Only 39% of leaders believe their organisations are performing strongly in this area.

Our Index looks at whether a clear employee engagement strategy is in place with clear ownership, the deployment of employee communications channels, and how engaged employees are with an organisation’s strategy.

Global % by category for Employee Communications



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Effectiveness of internal channels to engage employees	50%
How well employees understand how their roles contribute to organisation’s strategy	25%



Based on these aspects, the allocations are relatively evenly split over the top three categories – with 26% qualifying as Trailblazers and 33% and 31% as Aspirants and Followers.

The communications channels that organisations are using to engage employees are wide ranging, with an average of 11.7 internal channels selected that they use. The channels rated as the most effective include intranets, advocacy and education-based sessions, employee Apps, focused meetings by specific leadership or divisional teams, and group sessions with the CEO or other Executive-level leaders.

Global % effective by channel



Global % overall vs Trailblazers for employee communications performance indicators



While our findings show organisations are typically using a lot of channels to communicate and perceive that they are using these relatively effectively, this may be misguided. Only 41% say that their organisation’s employees have a strong understanding of how their role contributes to the corporate strategy. Part of this may be failing to engage with key internal stakeholders, with only 40% saying that their organisation’s Communications and Human Resources teams are highly aligned in employee engagement strategies. Organisations in the Trailblazer category for Employee Engagement are significantly more likely to perform better in both of these areas.

Financial Communications –

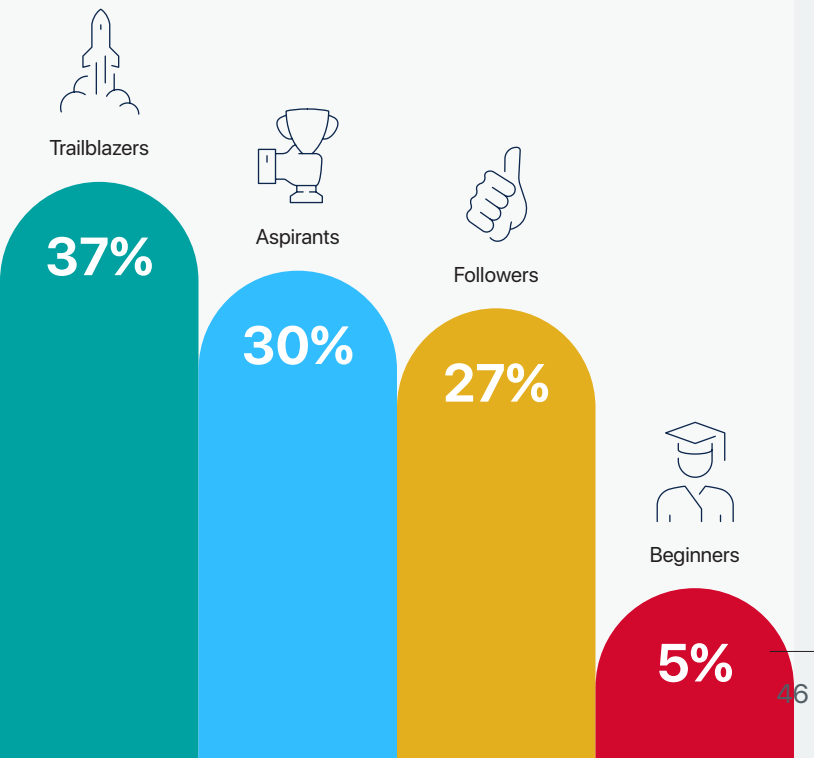
The need to show value

For Financial Communications we assessed whether organisations have a clear strategy and owner, whether value is well understood by investors, effectiveness of results reporting, financial media engagement, and performance in capital raising.

Applying this framework, 37% qualify as Trailblazers in Financial Communications, with 57% categorised as Aspirants or Followers, and 5% as Beginners.

Overall, 86% see this area is important for reputation management, but only 46% believe they are strong in it.

Global % by category for Financial Communications



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Organisation's value understanding by investors / shareholders	20%
Financial results communications effectiveness and reporting	20%
Key business and financial media understanding	20%
Performance in communications around capital raising activities	15%

86%

Financial Communications is important

46%

Our organisation is strong in Financial Communications

47%

Financial Communications has a clear strategy and owner

In reviewing why this is, only 51% say they have been highly effective in communicating their financial results in the past 12 months, and less than half (47%) believe their organisation’s value is well understood by investors and shareholders. A similar number (43%), feel that financial media have a strong understanding of their organisation.

When looking at capital raising activities, it is evident that there are mixed feelings, with just 39% saying that they are very satisfied with their performance.

Global % rating of performance satisfaction

	Very satisfied	39%
	Somewhat satisfied	46%
	Neutral	10%
	Somewhat dissatisfied	3%
	Very dissatisfied	1%
	Not relevant	1%



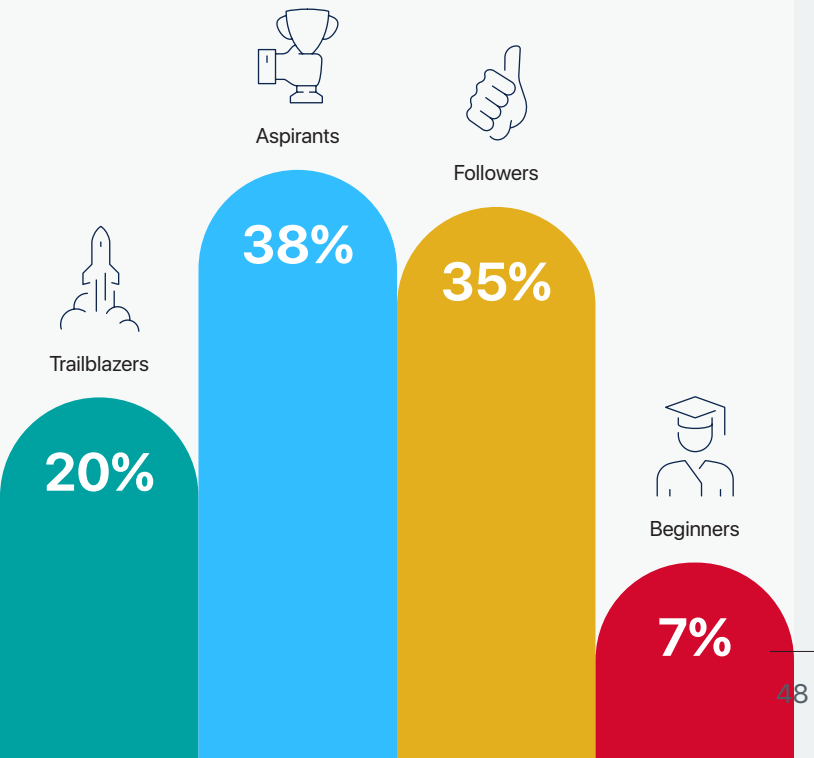
Government & Regulatory Affairs – Relationships matter

While Government Relations & Regulatory Affairs is seen as central to successful overall reputation management by 84%, only 39% of leaders feel their organisations are performing strongly in this area, and only slightly more (43%) say their organisation has a clear strategy and owner for this area.

The assessment for Government & Regulatory looks at approaches to strategy, stakeholder mapping and engagement, and policy. Based on this, one in five are categorised as Trailblazers, with the majority falling into the Aspirants (38%) and Followers (35%) categories.

In stakeholder mapping, while 98% have attempted some form of stakeholder mapping only 43% say their organisation has approached this in a comprehensive way.

Global % by category for Government & Regulatory Affairs



Criteria	Weighting
Clear strategy and owner in place	25%
Stakeholder mapping	25%
Engagement frequency	25%
Activity in influencing policy	25%

84%

Government & Regulatory Affairs is important

39%

Our organisation is strong in Government & Regulatory Affairs

43%

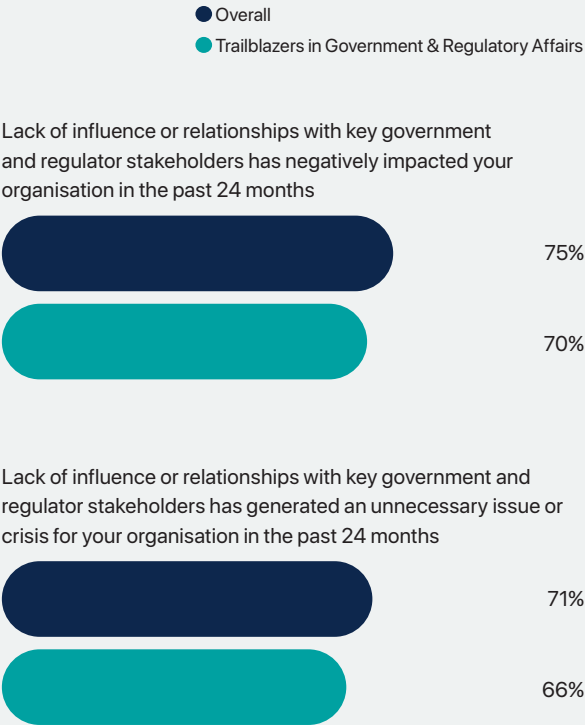
Government & Regulatory Affairs has a clear strategy and owner

The average frequency of engagement across different stakeholder groups tends to be quarterly, with slightly more frequent engagement with community leaders and groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Further findings in this area suggest that current government and regulatory engagement efforts may not be optimised across the board, with nearly two thirds (65%) rating their organisation as being moderately active at best in their activities to influence policy outcomes, and only 36% strongly agreeing that their activity level in this area is sufficient.

Once again, we see clear impacts with 75% stating that a lack of influence or relationships with key stakeholders negatively impacted their organisation in the past 24 months, and 71% saying this had generated an unnecessary crisis or issue over the same time period. Those in the Trailblazer category for Government & Regulatory Affairs were far less likely to experience these issues.

Global % overall vs Trailblazers in experiencing issues driven by government and regulator stakeholders in past 24 months



Global % average frequency of engagement with stakeholders

	Government	Regulators	Community leaders / groups	NGOs
Annually or biannually	31%	19%	20%	23%
Quarterly	39%	41%	34%	37%
Monthly	21%	27%	31%	27%
Weekly	7%	10%	11%	11%
Daily	2%	3%	3%	3%



Part Three: How reputational risks and weaknesses are impacting organisations

Reputational weaknesses impact business performance

Nearly three in four (72%) of the leaders surveyed say they have experienced at least one form of negative business impact owing to reputational weak spots over the past 12 months.

These impacts are varied and have affected a wide range of stakeholders, including customers, current and future employees, and government or regulatory stakeholders. The specific impacts experienced were around their organisation's ability to do business with customers (61%), ability to attract and retain talent (54%), ability to recover from a crisis (54%), incurring financial losses (53%), and negatively impacting government and community relationships (51%).

A direct correlation is seen between performance and impact with those scoring highest in the Index overall and for Reputation Strategy. Only half (47%) of Trailblazers for Reputation Strategy faced negative business impacts from lack of reputational strength over the same time period – 25 points below the overall, global average. By comparison, Aspirants, Followers and Beginners in this same area were up to 10 points more likely to face negative consequences of negative reputation across categories.

Most unprepared to tackle new threats

As reputational risks increase and the environment for audience engagement becomes more fragmented, 56% of global leaders believe that reputation is becoming more difficult to manage, with just 21% saying it is getting easier.

Many of the new emerging threats stem from technology – from AI to misinformation and disinformation, which will only increase as technology develops at a faster pace in the coming years. Several areas are connected to the core of organisational values, especially sustainability and DE&I.

Despite acknowledging the potential impact of key reputation-related issues on their companies, most leaders do not feel prepared to manage these. In fact, a significant gap exists between levels of concern and taking action to prepare.

For nearly every emerging risk we asked leaders about, roughly two in three feel concerned but unprepared to manage it.

The rise of misinformation and disinformation (67 pt gap), employee activism (67 pt gap), geopolitical tensions (66 pt gap), and greenwashing top the list, indicating a need for immediate attention toward these areas.

Global % – type of negative impacts experienced owing to lack of reputational strength over the past 12 months

	Overall	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Faced at least one of the below negative impacts	72%	47%	72%	82%	69%
Ability to do business with some customers and markets	61%	38%	64%	68%	50%
Financial cost to business	53%	38%	57%	53%	37%
Ability to recruit and retain talent	54%	39%	57%	55%	43%
Ability to recover from a crisis	54%	38%	56%	56%	35%
Relationships with government and community stakeholders	51%	36%	55%	51%	24%

Global % highly concerned vs % highly prepared to manage reputational risks

	Very concerned	Highly prepared	Delta
Impact of AI on Communications	95%	38%	57pts
Rise of mis- and disinformation	97%	30%	67pts
Stakeholder and customer activism	95%	33%	62pts
Employee activism	95%	28%	67pts
Increased ESG and sustainability scrutiny	95%	32%	63pts
Greenwashing claims	94%	28%	66pts
Prioritisation of DE&I	95%	33%	62pts
Newsroom consolidation	94%	30%	64pts
Data privacy and cybersecurity issues	96%	36%	60pts
Rising geopolitical tensions	95%	29%	66pts

Based on our Index, the relationship between performance and preparedness becomes clearer. Analysing Trailblazers in AI & Digital Environment, Crisis & Issues Management, Media Engagement, Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership, ESG & Sustainability Strategy, Employee Communications, and Government & Regulatory Affairs shows how Trailblazers separate themselves from the average leader in issue preparedness.

For example, Trailblazers in AI & Digital Environment are at least 20 points more prepared than the average leader to deal with technology-related issues. Similarly, Trailblazers in ESG & Sustainability Strategy are at least 15 points more prepared than the average leader to deal with ESG and greenwashing related issues.

Across the other areas of reputation management, Trailblazers are at least 10 points more prepared than their global peers on all issues analysed.

The relationship between performance and preparedness based on our Index methodology is most profound when looking at leaders ranked as Trailblazers across all areas of reputation management.

Overall Trailblazers are much more prepared than the average leader on data privacy and cybersecurity issues (35 point increase over average preparedness), impact of AI on communications (30 points) and increased ESG and sustainability scrutiny (30 points).

Global % highly prepared for risks vs AI & Digital Environment Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Impact of AI on Communications	38%	61%	43%	25%	13%
Rise of mis- and disinformation	30%	44%	30%	25%	13%
Data privacy and cybersecurity issues	36%	56%	42%	22%	13%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs Crisis & Issues Management Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Stakeholder and customer activism	28%	40%	32%	20%	5%
Rising geopolitical tensions	29%	37%	25%	18%	2%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs Media Engagement Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Stakeholder and customer activism	28%	41%	38%	28%	12%
Newsroom consolidation	30%	39%	33%	26%	9%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Stakeholder and customer activism	28%	51%	40%	25%	22%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs ESG & Sustainability Strategy Index performance

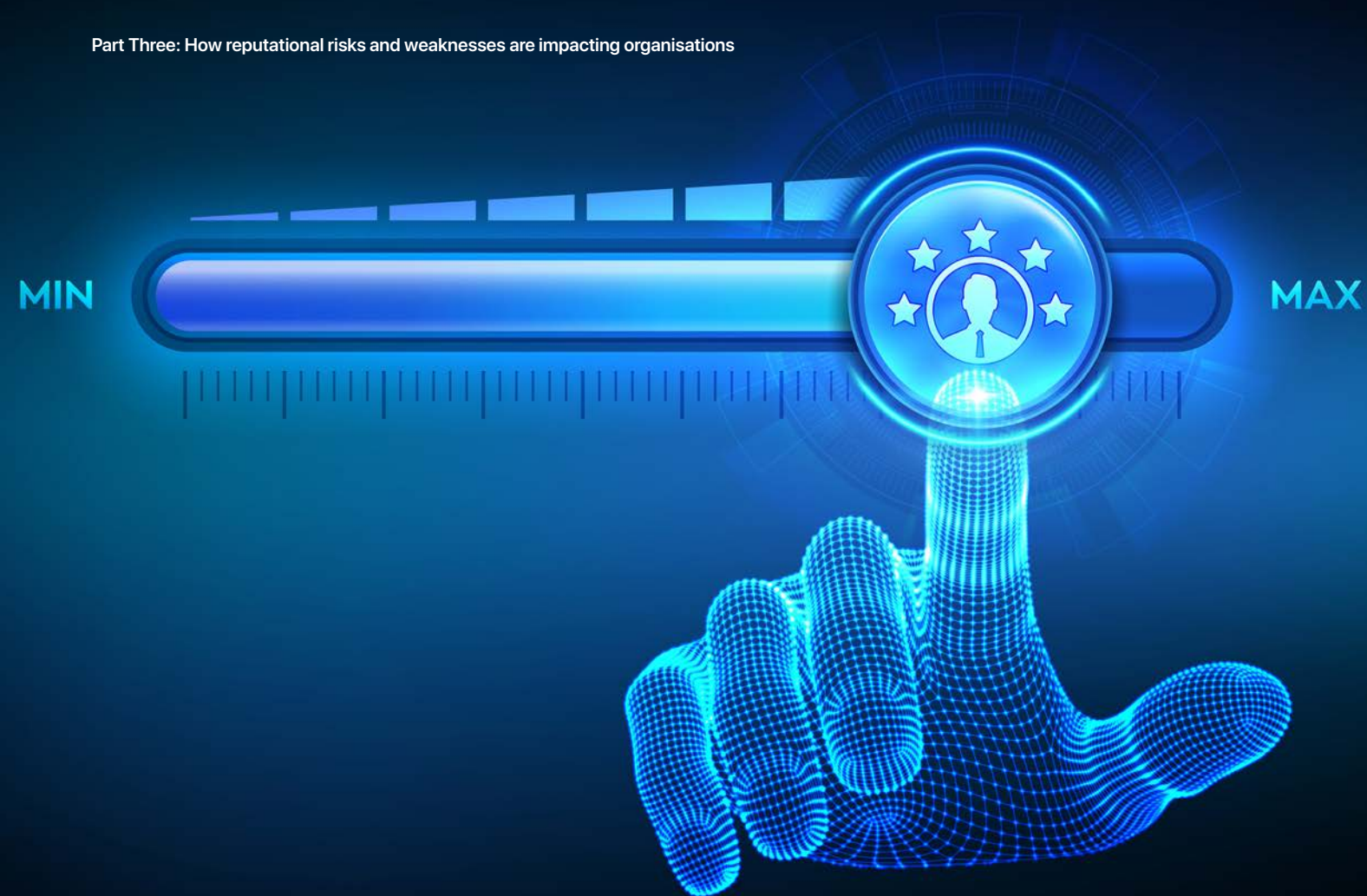
	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
ESG and sustainability scrutiny	32%	51%	42%	33%	22%
Greenwashing claims	28%	43%	36%	26%	21%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs Employee Communications Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Employee activism	28%	40%	35%	29%	20%
Prioritisation of DE&I	33%	55%	40%	36%	20%

Global % highly prepared for risks vs Government & Regulatory Affairs Index performance

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Rising geopolitical tensions	29%	44%	31%	22%	8%



Global % highly prepared to manage reputational risks by overall category

	Average	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Impact of AI on Communications	38%	68%	47%	15%	4%
Rise of misinformation and disinformation	30%	54%	32%	20%	4%
Stakeholder and customer activism	33%	55%	39%	18%	1%
Employee activism	28%	52%	32%	15%	3%
Increased ESG and sustainability scrutiny	32%	62%	37%	17%	4%
Greenwashing claims	28%	53%	31%	15%	3%
Prioritisation of DE&I	33%	62%	38%	17%	4%
Newsroom consolidation	30%	54%	34%	16%	1%
Data privacy and cybersecurity issues	36%	71%	42%	15%	0%
Rising geopolitical tensions	29%	57%	32%	14%	4%

Corporate Affairs leaders with high ownership achieve better outcomes

As covered earlier in this report, a key finding in this study is the tendency for CEOs to feel higher levels of responsibility for corporate reputation than other members of the C-Suite and also Corporate Affairs Leaders.

As part of our analysis, a trend is observed that Corporate Affairs Leaders who feel they have a high level of responsibility for reputation management tend to perform better across all areas of reputation management.

When looking across 15 different aspects associated with reputation management, high responsibility Corporate Affairs Leaders performed on average 7 percentage points better than the average, particularly around reputation management strategy and AI integration.

When looking at the findings in relation to our Index, the same trends continues, with high responsibility Corporate Affairs Leaders significantly more likely to work for organisations categorized as Trailblazers at an overall level.

These significant increases in nearly all categories show the importance of emboldening communications and public affairs professionals to own their organisations' reputation-building efforts by giving them licence to lead on reputation management strategies.

Global % organisations with Corporate Affairs leaders feeling high responsibility for reputation by category

	Trailblazers	Aspirants	Followers	Beginners
Overall	76%	54%	23%	3%
Reputation Strategy	61%	34%	5%	0%
Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership	23%	35%	30%	11%
Media Engagement	22%	47%	31%	0%
Government & Regulatory Affairs	31%	41%	25%	3%
AI & Digital Environment	32%	42%	24%	3%
Employee Communications	38%	34%	25%	3%
ESG & Sustainability Strategy	14%	24%	40%	22%
Crisis Management	59%	30%	10%	0%
Financial Communications	52%	30%	16%	2%

Global % strong performance by reputation management area

	All respondents	High responsibility Comms/Public Affairs leaders	Point increase
Reputation management strategy	48%	58%	+10
CEO profile	42%	48%	+6
Executive / leadership team profile	44%	53%	+9
Media profile and relationships	35%	41%	+6
Government and regulator relationships	39%	45%	+6
NGO relationships	33%	37%	+4
Community engagement	38%	43%	+5
Digital footprint and profile	38%	44%	+6
(generative) AI integration	39%	49%	+10
Employee engagement / sentiment	39%	46%	+7
ESG and sustainability performance and communications	39%	47%	+8
Crisis and issues communications preparedness	39%	45%	+6
Financial reporting / results	46%	53%	+7
Investor / shareholder relations	42%	48%	+6
Reputation measurement	43%	50%	+7



Part Four: Investment is increasing

Aligned with reputation being viewed as a key driver of commercial success and with a growing risk landscape, investment in reputation management is forecast to increase.

Most leaders plan to make at least some level of investment in several reputation management functions over the next year, including reputation management strategy (which 80% plan to increase), reputation measurement (77%), and AI integration (76%).

In the **Americas**, while reputation management strategy (81%) is the most common area identified for investment, most leaders (80%) also plan to invest in ESG and sustainability performance and communications, CEO profiling, and the profiles of their broader executive leadership team.

Asia Pacific leaders are unique in ranking employee engagement as a top focus for investment (70%), alongside reputation management strategy (80%), and CEO profiling (77%). Just 39% of leaders rate employee engagement as an area of strength, showcasing the need for increased funding of this capability.

Leaders in **Europe** are planning slightly lower levels of investment, with an average of two thirds planning to invest in each of the areas of reputation management. The most common areas for investment are reputation management strategy (74%), CEO profiling (73%), and financial reporting and results (70%), showcasing a strong focus for market leaders on enhancing executive-level participation.

Leaders in the **Middle East & Africa** plan to invest in nearly all areas of reputation management, with nine in 10 planning at least a small increase across capabilities. Reputation management strategy (94%) and reputation measurement (93%) are the most likely areas for investment.

Global % plan to increase investments in reputation management over the next 12 months

	Global	Americas	APAC	Europe	Middle East & Africa
Reputation management strategy	80%	81%	80%	74%	94%
CEO profile	77%	80%	77%	73%	91%
Executive / leadership team profile	75%	80%	75%	68%	93%
Media profile and relationships	76%	77%	76%	69%	92%
Community engagement	74%	74%	75%	67%	90%
Digital footprint and profile	75%	69%	71%	65%	91%
(generative) AI integration	76%	76%	75%	66%	90%
Employee engagement / sentiment	75%	76%	77%	68%	90%
ESG and sustainability performance and communications	75%	80%	75%	69%	92%
Crisis and issues communications preparedness	75%	75%	77%	68%	91%
Financial reporting / results	76%	75%	75%	70%	91%
Investor / shareholder relations	75%	76%	76%	67%	91%
Reputation measurement	77%	80%	77%	68%	93%



Part Five: Reputation advice falling short of expectations

Given the wide-ranging skills and expertise required for successful reputation management, most organisational leaders rely on a wide network of advisors for advice – both internally within their organisations and externally. However, our study reveals significant issues and gaps in this area.

In particular, leaders lack confidence in the advice they receive for NGO engagement. Only 29% consider their advisors strong in this area, compared with 17% who rate the advice they have received as weak. The lack of solid advice around NGO engagement is consistent across markets, with leaders in all four regions rating this the lowest out of all areas tested. Similarly, leaders see an opportunity for improvement in the advice around engaging other stakeholder groups. Only 34% of leaders rate the advice they have received around stakeholder engagement as strong, with only 35% indicating this for community engagement.

Leaders are also finding gaps in advice around narrative and messaging and ESG and sustainability strategy. Less than one in three leaders (33%) consider the advice they receive in these areas as strong.

While there are many areas that leaders require stronger advice from counsellors, the highest number of leaders feel they receive strong advice is in relation to reputation management strategy, which is still low at 45%. Strong advice in reputation management strategy was consistent across markets, with leaders receiving the best advice from their advisors here in every region surveyed. Likewise, only one in ten (10%) globally consider the advice they receive on strategy weak.

In the **Americas**, nearly half of leaders consider the advice they receive on investor and shareholder relations (49%) and financial communications (48%) to be strongest. Only 38% of **Asia Pacific** leaders also assess the advice on financial communications to be strong.

Leaders based in **Europe** gave the lowest marks for external advisory support across all areas. Beyond reputation management strategy, investor/shareholder relations (32%) is the area they rated the highest.

Middle East & Africa leaders are more confident in the advice that they receive. Digital reputation management (57%), employee engagement and internal communications (57%) and financial communications (56%) are among the areas where they are most satisfied with the advice being received.

Based on these results, it is clear that advisors – both inhouse and on the consultancy side – need to adjust counsel to deliver both overarching strategic guidance as well as direction on execution to their business stakeholders. While leaders feel that strategic advice is strong, applying that advice to stakeholder engagement, messaging, and sustainability can drive a greater impact on their business.



Global and by region % receiving strong advice in each area

	Global	Americas	APAC	Europe	Middle East & Africa
Reputation management strategy	45%	56%	44%	33%	67%
Narrative and messaging	33%	36%	33%	28%	39%
Media relations	37%	42%	37%	29%	51%
Government and regulator relations	34%	37%	34%	29%	41%
Public policy and advocacy	36%	42%	36%	29%	54%
NGO engagement	29%	31%	30%	24%	31%
Community engagement	35%	38%	36%	28%	52%
Stakeholder engagement	34%	41%	35%	29%	36%
Digital reputation management	37%	43%	36%	29%	57%
Social media management	34%	40%	35%	27%	38%
Employee engagement and internal communications	36%	41%	35%	29%	57%
ESG and sustainability strategy	32%	37%	33%	27%	35%
ESG and sustainability communications	36%	38%	38%	26%	54%
Crisis and issues communications	33%	39%	34%	26%	41%
Financial communications	38%	48%	38%	28%	56%
Investor / shareholder relations	38%	49%	36%	32%	50%

Recommendations

Gather critical data to translate strategy to action

Reputation is universally viewed as important, which is a great start, but bridging the strategy to action gap that we see throughout this report requires more. Insights and measurement are pinpointed as critical enablers to achieve this. Those with strong approaches in these areas performed significantly better in every area of reputation management, including being able to engage and influence audiences.

CEOs can't do it alone, corporate affairs teams must be empowered

Successful reputation management is a team effort. While typically led by the CEO, our findings show that other C-Suite team members and Corporate Affairs Leaders do not feel as high levels of ownership with reputational efforts and don't feel the same levels of responsibility. Further to this corporate affairs and HR teams are working in silos when it comes to employee communications. This lack of alignment can be another significant barrier to translating strategies into actions, with organisations with Corporate Affairs Leaders feeling a high responsibility for reputation perform significantly better in all areas of the Index. Corporate affairs teams that help their CEOs to build broader executive and company support for reputation management efforts will be more successful.

Global alignment and localisation must be balanced

A key weakness in the area of Reputation Strategy is lack of alignment across key communications and corporate positions. While alignment is important, with vast differences in opinions, approaches, and values seen across different markets, it's important to balance global and local needs. With rising geopolitical tensions around the world, these areas must also be navigated by organisations with great care to avoid unintended consequences.

Build a culture of crisis preparedness

In a reputation management environment where risks are on the rise and evolving at a rapid pace, organisations must build a culture of preparedness around crisis.

Trailblazers in Crisis & Issues Management whose organisations have high levels of preparedness are much less likely to have experienced negative business impacts owing to reputational weaknesses over the past 12 months.

Conduct a critical assessment for blind spots and weaknesses

Our analysis uncovers a number of areas where almost all organisations need to improve and/or may be unnecessarily exposing themselves to risk. Some areas identified include being vigilant around cyber and data security, advancing progress in ESG and sustainability strategies and investing in a dedicated team, which correlated with higher success in that area. Investing in government & regulatory relationship management with proper stakeholder mapping, also correlated with being less likely to experience issues with this audience.

Consistency and frequency are important for success

Across a number of areas, including Executive Profiling & Thought Leadership, Media Engagement, and Government & Regulatory Affairs, regular activity and engagement was identified as a key catalyst for greater success. The 38% of leaders who say their organisation is a thought leader are more likely to have a regular drumbeat of thought leadership activities. In media relations, the 31% who feel their organisation is sufficiently engaging with media are more likely to think that journalists portray them accurately, and greater frequency of interactions is linked with greater ability to influence government and regulatory stakeholders.

How you communicate your results builds value

Financial results are critical moments to demonstrate corporate performance and ultimately value. The 51% who say they have been highly effective in communicating financial results, are also 14 points more likely to say their organisation's value is well understood by investors and shareholders, and 20 points more likely to say they have been very satisfied with capital raising efforts.

About Sandpiper

Sandpiper is an award-winning strategic communications and public affairs consultancy based in Asia Pacific and operating globally.



We use our shared experience to make sense of the challenges our clients face in times of change.



We draw on rich, data-driven insights and research to inform our advice and deliver measurable value.

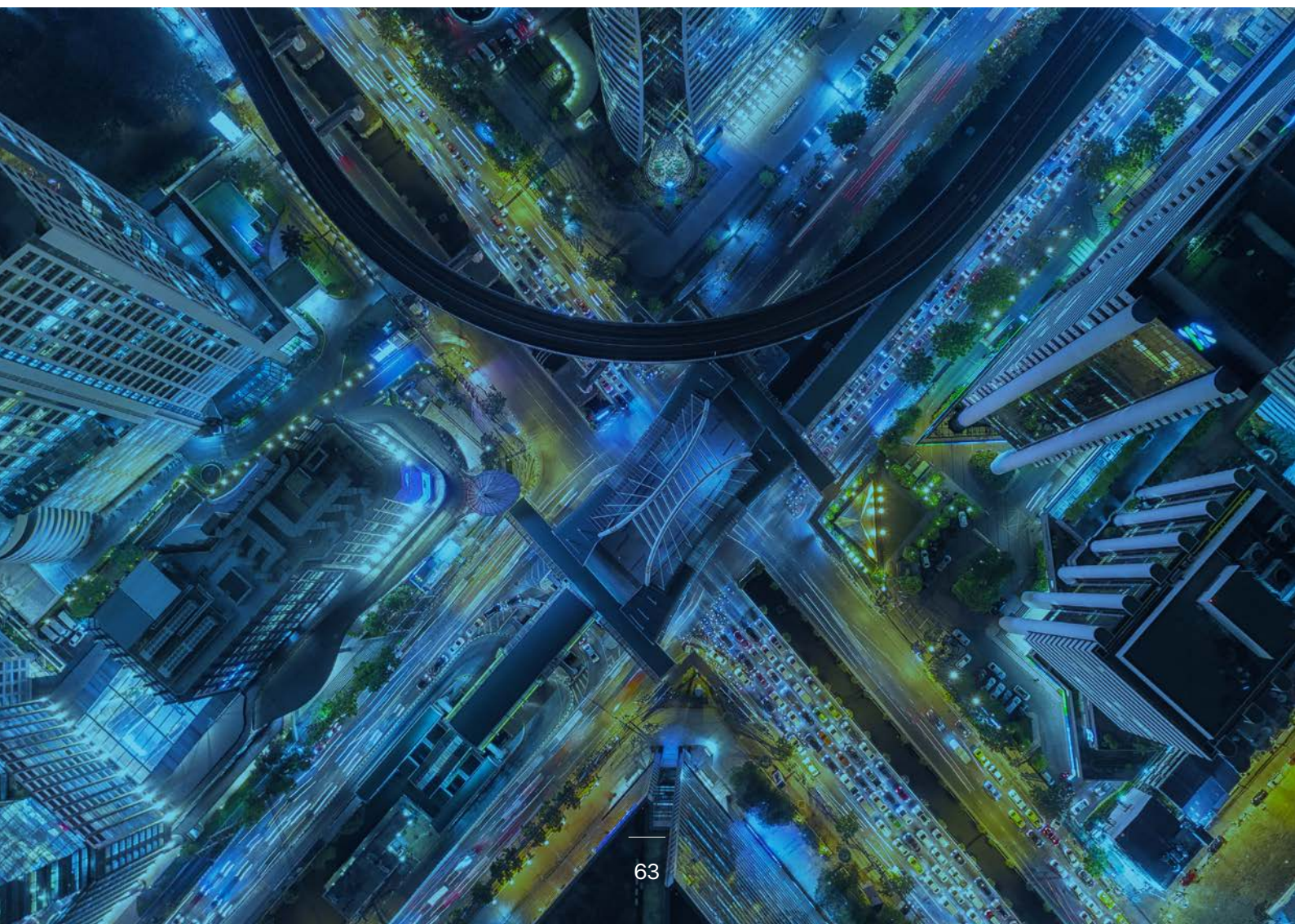


We work as a single, global team, with one P&L. This allows us to serve our clients flexibly wherever they are in the world.

Our team are trusted advisors to industry leaders and market disruptors. We combine strong regional market understanding with global perspectives.

Our deep specialist knowledge in the **technology, finance, health, professional services, consumer brands** and **energy and environment** sectors ensure we understand the challenges our clients face, can think creatively about their issues, and shape communications to achieve their business goals.

In 2023 and 2024 Sandpiper was awarded **Specialist Consultancy, Sandpiper Energy, Environment and ESG Practice** at the Public Relations & Communications Association (PRCA) APAC Awards 2024, **Large Agency Certificate of Excellence** by PRWeek Best Places to Work Asia Pacific 2023, **Large Consultancy of the Year** by the Public Relations & Communications Association (PRCA), **Large Consultancy of the Year** by PR Awards Asia Pacific 2023, and **Midsize Agency of the Year** by PRovoke Media SABRE Awards Asia Pacific 2023.





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