HAVAS



CUP OF CORPORATE COMMS

AN UNFILTERED LOOK AT WHAT'S PERCOLATING NOW

Below are key themes that dominated corporate communications news in October 2026.

As AI rewires discovery, social platforms are rewriting the rules of access.



A brand's social presence is becoming one of its biggest assets in AI search. *Social Media Today* reports on an SE Ranking study of 100,000 keywords that found social platform links in about two-thirds of Google AI Overview responses, a third of AI Mode replies and 8.4% of ChatGPT answers. YouTube is the most-cited source in Google's AI Overviews, while Reddit and LinkedIn lead the social citations in ChatGPT.

Yet the platforms feeding AI are pulling up the drawbridge. *Axios* reports that Reddit will shift to a primarily logged-in experience after search referral traffic fell meaningfully in Q3, with tests starting outside the U.S. this quarter. That follows *TechCrunch's* report that Reddit will end RSS support on Nov. 13 and close its public API by March 2027, cutting off the access many social listening and research tools rely on. Meanwhile, *Business Insider* reports that Instagram is leaning hard into long-form, horizontal video and a rebuilt TV app to stay culturally relevant against YouTube.

Bottom Line: Social is now both a front door to AI discovery and an increasingly gated community. Brands need a consistent, credible presence on the platforms AI engines cite, and comms teams should pressure-test how tightening platform access will affect their listening, measurement and research.

Influence is moving to people with something real to say.



Talk of "influencer fatigue" is everywhere, but *Marketing Dive's* deep dive finds the backlash narrower than the headlines suggest. More than 80% of marketers plan to increase influencer budgets, per Sprout Social; the ANA expects U.S. creator ad spend to reach $43.9 billion this year; and 58% of consumers say they've bought a product because of an influencer endorsement. Much of the fatigue traces to mid-tier creators flooding feeds with branded posts, and brands now rank follower count dead last when choosing partners, with suitability at the top.

The energy is shifting toward credibility and expertise. *Financial Times* profiles "workfluencers," professionals who build audiences by posting about their day jobs; LinkedIn's CEO told *Fortune* that the number of creators on the platform has increased 60%, with 83% still holding a day job. *Business Insider* reports that brands such as Rothy's and Poppi are partnering with Substack writers, valuing influence within a community over raw reach.

Brands are rethinking their own playbooks, too. Clorox CMO Eric Schwartz told the ANA's Masters of Marketing conference, per *Marketing Dive*, that the company has replaced big-bang campaigns with "systems of continuous relevance": always-on engines, powered by people and enabled by AI, that listen, adapt and improve work while it's still in market. And members of the Forbes Agency Council argue that communities earn more trust when brands loosen their grip: let members help each other, keep critical threads visible and show the real people behind the business.

Bottom Line: Creator marketing is maturing. The winners favor trusted experts and engaged communities over follower counts. Says Nancy Anderson, HAVAS Red's EVP of Social & Content, "Influence comes from voices people trust. Those voices can be creators, experts, employees or customers, each contributing something different, from content and reach to credibility and community connection. The opportunity for brands is to bring those voices together with purpose and invest in relationships over time, so their influence grows beyond a single campaign or post."

Sound is becoming a brand's emotional shortcut.

It's time for brands to go from sonic branding to sonic participation. *Marketplace* explores why Wendy's (with an emo EP, "Songs to Listen to in a Wendy's Parking Lot") and e.l.f. (with "Mirror Mix," its second original album) are releasing records, while noting the return on these projects is still largely unproven. *Fast Company* makes the broader case: music shapes how people feel in ways a sponsored post or athlete endorsement rarely can, attaching itself to memories and identity.

The craft is getting more sophisticated, too. Jennifer Fife, an executive producer at HAVAS' Art of Sound, told *Muse by Clios* that she's seeing brands move from a single sonic logo to full sonic ecosystems, extending even to the small functional sounds people hear every day.

Bottom Line: Sound is one of the most underused trust-builders in a brand's toolkit. The brands that benefit most will treat it as a consistent identity system across every touchpoint, not a one-off stunt.



It's time to reinvest in trust, inside and out.

Leaders think they have more trust than they do.

BCG's latest CEO Insomnia Index found that nearly 90% of CEOs believe employees trust their leadership, but only 46% of employees agree. Writing in *Fortune*, BCG's Deborah Lovich argues the fix lives in everyday behavior: leaders who leave their desks, recognize achievements, take an interest in employees' goals and involve them in shaping change.

Candor beats certainty. In *PR Daily*, ROI Communications' Sheryl Lewis argues that trust doesn't come from leaders having every answer, and that communicators belong in the room before an unpopular decision is final. *Ragan* offers the practical side: prepare leaders for candid Q&As by rehearsing the toughest question the way a worried employee would actually ask it.

And Gallup and Bentley data reported by *Ragan* show only 44% of employees want employers weighing in on social issues broadly, while far more want to hear about topics that shape their lives, such as mental health (62%) and healthcare (56%).

The audience is no longer just internal. Speakers at Ragan's Internal Communications Conference argued that anything shared inside a company should be assumed to travel outside it. Microsoft is building on that reality: *Forbes* reports the company moved its comms team under President Brad Smith, with CEO Satya Nadella calling for the employees closest to the work to play a bigger role in telling its story.

Bottom Line: In a mixternal world, trust is built in the hard conversations, not the polished announcements. Leaders who show up, speak plainly about what affects people's work and lives, and admit what they don't yet know will close the gap faster than any campaign.

On sustainability, companies are saying less and leveraging it more.

The reports keep coming; the press releases don't. *ESG Dive* reports on Teneo's analysis of 250 S&P 500 sustainability reports: most companies that published last year did so again, but only 32% paired their report with a press release, down from 62% in 2022. Fewer use "ESG" in their titles, with "impact" and "purpose" gaining ground.

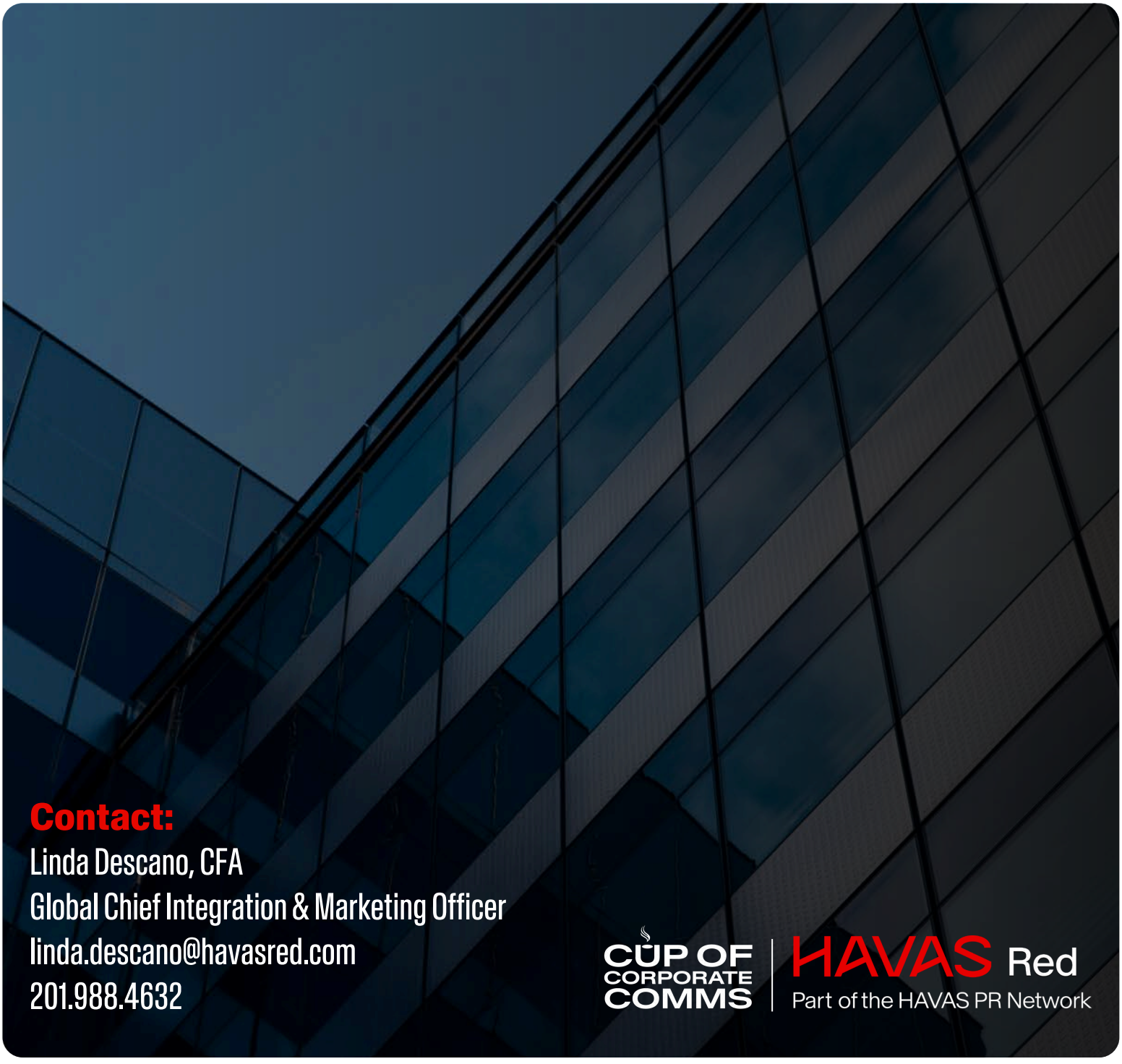
Quieter doesn't mean retreating. In *HBR*, NYU Stern's Tensie Whelan argues the business case is intact, as companies keep investing to cut costs, reduce risk and strengthen supply chains; she points to PwC data showing 82% of companies are maintaining or accelerating decarbonization commitments. A second *HBR* piece adds a caution: polished disclosure isn't the same as preparedness. Reporting reduces risk only when it builds internal capability, as at Schneider Electric, which ties 20% of its CEO's annual bonus to its sustainability impact index.

Bottom Line: Sustainability is shifting from a reputation play to an operating discipline. Companies that embed it in how they run the business and can explain its value in plain business terms when stakeholders ask, will be better positioned than those focused on the report itself. "The companies building the most credibility today aren't necessarily the ones talking the most about sustainability," says Pattie Sullivan, HAVAS Red SVP, Practice Head, B2B. "They're the ones connecting it to the challenges they're addressing, the innovation they're driving and the long-term value they're creating. When communications is grounded in proof—not promises and commitments—sustainability becomes more meaningful for stakeholders and more impactful for the business."



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