

**VMAGROUP**

COMMUNICATIONS | DIGITAL | MARKETING  
INTERIM | PERMANENT

# CHANGING COMMUNICATIONS

*You cannot be effective as a CEO without a trusted communicator by your side*

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# ABOUT VMAGROUP



International recruitment and executive search specialist for communications, digital and marketing



Established for 40+ years



Headquartered in London with offices in Amsterdam and Brussels

## Key findings from 2016 report “Beyond Communications”

- Focus of communications had shifted from producing content to protecting the company's reputation.
- A new breed of communications director had emerged that was actively involved in transforming and growing the business.
- Increasing numbers of CEOs saw communications as having a vital strategic voice in all business decisions.
- The digital revolution has inspired - principles of “authenticity” and “transparency”.
- While core technical skills were still important, businesses were now looking for true, proactive leadership from their communications directors.

## Key findings from 2019 report “Into Communications”

- Comms leaders were now expected to have a full understanding of why and how strategic decisions were made – but the question of whether they should have a seat on the board was no longer deemed important.
- CSR had become a primary communications concern and there was widespread recognition of the financial value of having a socially responsible strategy.
- Digitisation remained a key area of growth, but many CEOs expressed disappointment at how long it was taking for the full potential of digital communication to be realised.
- Employer branding had risen rapidly up the corporate agenda, with organisations equally concerned with how they communicated with candidates as with consumers.
- There were opportunities for comms leaders to strengthen their teams by welcoming professionals from non-classical backgrounds who had new insights and perspectives on how to get the organisation’s message across.

## Key findings from **2022** report “Changing Communications”

- Digital transformation accelerated during the pandemic, with fully digitised ways of working emerging.
- Organisations expanding communication with their employees - CEOs now affording equal status to internal and external comms.
- Finding the right hybrid working models is a top priority for CEOs.
- CEOs are looking to comms leaders to play a central role in organisational transformation with further turbulent times ahead.
- CEOs are addressing issues around diversity, equity and inclusion and climate change.

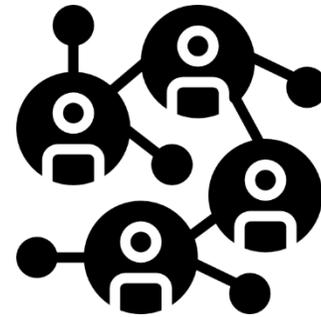
# KEY TASKS AS SEEN BY CEO'S



The Classics



Change



Internal & External

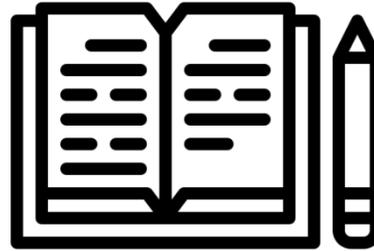


CSR



Digital

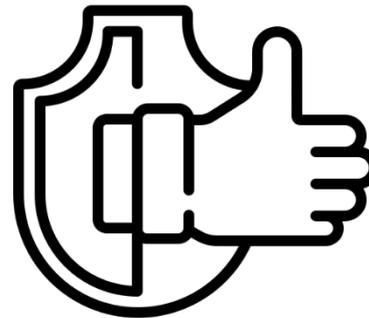
# THE CLASSICS REMAIN



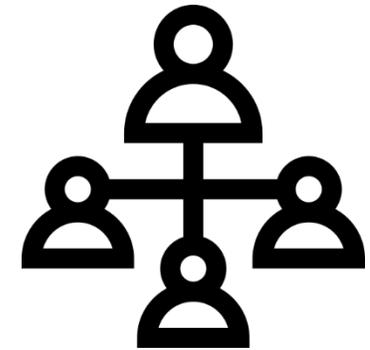
Translator and  
storyteller



Guardian and  
protector



Trusted  
advisor



Functional  
head

*“Through COVID, I was sitting together with my communication executive twice a week, because things were changing on a daily basis.”*

*“We had a Gold Cell, as we described it, that would meet every day, seven days a week... And, right from the outset, comms was an integral part of that group.”*

*“Communications really were the centre of the team [during the pandemic], whereas normally they would be just one of the people sitting around the table.”*

*“The frequency of communication went up during Covid because we weren't able to connect at a personal level. Meetings became less informal and more scheduled than they were in the past.”*

*“We became far more centralised in communication control than we would normally have been. I think that's probably always the case when you've got a crisis because you need very careful control of the communications in order not to stoke the flames.”*

*“Pre-Covid, communication was often the mouthpiece of policy and strategy. Now they have become more of a co-creator. They are part of the whole strategy design process and are shaping how we bring it to market.”*

# CONCLUSIONS / EXPECTATIONS

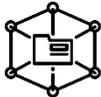
Identify and build on all the changes that worked to create a stronger, fitter function, capable of navigating the ongoing uncertainties that lie ahead



SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT



HONESTY, CLARITY, EMPHATY



AUTHORITY



NUANCE



COOLNESS UNDER FIRE

# SUSTAINABILITY



Almost every leader we spoke to highlighted the **importance of net zero.**

Climate change looks set to be one of the key issues that organisations and their comms teams will need to address over the next decade and more.

***Comms leaders will have a critical role in shaping how these issues are viewed, debated, managed and addressed & need to be aware of and understand (forthcoming) regulatory developments.***

## **External**

Traditional business media and financial media

Wide range of social media

Employer branding

## **Internal**

Blue collar, white collar, all locations, localized in language that is understood by all

Employee engagement

## **Fully Aligned**

Also, with Marketing

## **Digital and Non-Digital**

**Central corporate and local company websites**

**Ready to handle feedback from pressure groups**

# STRUCTURE



- Has team capacity developed in line with increased workload?
- Is the department too centralised or not centralised enough?
- Are all centres of excellence and content hubs in the right locations?
- Should communications be more closely aligned with marketing and HR?

# EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Has the content hub or centre of excellence delivered for both traditional and digital media?
- What skills are lacking?
- Where is extra capacity needed?
- Is CSR strategy being weaved through all communications activity?



# INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

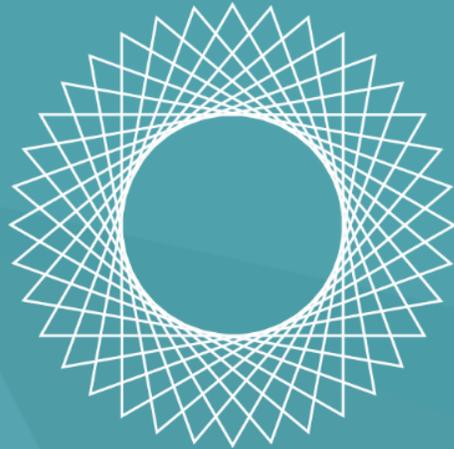
- Did messaging from HQ land well during the pandemic?
- Has the balance between central and local communications been right?
- Are there any language issues that need addressing?
- Could internal and external communications be better aligned?
- How will you share the outcomes of your next employee engagement survey?

# DIGITAL

- Is your company ready to go digital first?
- Where do you want your digital expertise to be located?
- Are your digital natives connected to the business at large?

# CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER CAPABILITIES MATRIX

<b>Key leadership skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managing complexity</li><li>• Decision making capabilities</li><li>• Results orientated</li><li>• Business insight</li><li>• The ability to instil trust</li></ul>	<b>Characteristics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic mind-set (not tactical or expert)</li><li>• Global perspective (not judgemental or narrow)</li><li>• Ability to drive (not influence) engagement</li><li>• Manage and lead through ambiguity</li></ul>
<b>Personal skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Courage</li><li>• Resilience</li><li>• Learning agility</li><li>• Collaborative skills</li><li>• Problem solving capabilities with speed and complexity</li></ul>	<b>What CEOs need and will demand</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expert advice with credibility and holding excellent judgement</li><li>• Business and financial acumen</li><li>• Relevant business or other functional experience</li><li>• Leadership skills</li><li>• Strategic competence</li></ul>



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