

BRYAN H. REBER, JUAN MENG, BRUCE K. BERGER, KARLA K. GOWER & ANSGAR ZERFASS

NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNICATION MONITOR 2018

TRACKING TRENDS IN FAKE
NEWS, ISSUES MANAGEMENT,
LEADERSHIP, WORK STRESS,
SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS AND
JOB SATISFACTION.

RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF
1,020 COMMUNICATION
PROFESSIONALS IN THE
U.S.A. AND CANADA.

THE NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNICATION MONITOR (NACM) IS AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT CONDUCTED BY A GROUP OF PROFESSORS FROM RENOWNED UNIVERSITIES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PLANK CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA. THE NACM IS A BI-ANNUAL, BI-NATIONAL STUDY EXPLORING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN NORTH AMERICA.

ORGANIZED AND SPONSORED BY:



10 STARTING POINTS

1

FAKE NEWS: THE AWARENESS LEVEL IS HIGH BUT THE RELEVANCE LEVEL IS LOW

Communication professionals agreed that fake news has become one of the most prominent issues and a heated topic in public discourse. A substantial percentage of surveyed communication professionals (n = 835; 81.8%) indicated that they have given attention to the debate about fake news. However, only 19% of surveyed professionals (n = 193) expressed that fake news is relevant for the daily work of their communication department or agency.

2

FAKE NEWS AFFECTED ORGANIZATION'S REPUTATION AND THE TOPICS VARIED

Slightly more than 20% of surveyed professionals (n = 218) indicated that their organization and reputation were affected by fake news once or multiple times. The top venue where fake news was published is social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc. (n = 175; 80.3%), followed by mass media such as newspapers, TV and radio (n = 118; 54.1%). Topics covered by fake news ranged from products and/or services (n = 113; 51.8%), organizations and/or brands (n = 108; 49.5%), to individuals (n = 97; 44.5%).

3

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES AND EXPERIENCE ARE THE CORE FORCES TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

The industry/profession is fully aware of the need to identify potential fake news to protect organizational reputation. However, less than 10% (n = 100) of surveyed professionals reported their organization installed specific technologies and/or systems. While some indicated they have implemented formal guidelines (n = 270; 26.5%) or are currently working on plans to deal with this issue (n = 133; 13.0%), nearly half of surveyed professionals (n = 435; 42.6%) reported their organization relies on communication professionals' competencies and experience to identify potential fake news.

4

BUILDING TRUST IS THE PRIORITY AND DEMANDS LONG-TERM EFFORTS

Although the industry is constantly challenged by the occurrence of new issues, surveyed professionals agreed that the top three most important issues for public relations and communication management in the next three years will be:

- 1) Building and maintaining trust (n = 506; 49.6%)
- 2) Coping with the digital evolution and the social media (n = 392; 38.4%)
- 3) Dealing with the demand for more transparency and active audiences (n = 319; 31.3%)

5

PROVIDING RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHTS TO DECISION-MAKERS

The majority of communication professionals agreed that it is important and necessary to provide research-based insights to organizational leaders. 57.6% reported they have provided research-based reports and insights to decision-makers. Such efforts helped communication professionals gain recognition in decision-making processes. Different types of research reports, including news briefings, media monitoring reports, reputation/brand reports, survey results, benchmarking reports and background reports, have been provided to top management team in organization.

6

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HIGHEST-RANKING COMMUNICATION LEADER IS SATISFACTORY

Communication leaders are often expected to be high performers in a hard-working culture. Communication professionals in both countries gave their top communication leaders satisfactory rating scores. The majority agreed their communication leader is actively involved in strategic decision-making processes (M = 5.54 based on a 7-point Likert-type scale) and demonstrates a strong ethical orientation in leadership performance (M = 5.46 based on a 7-point Likert-type scale). Overall, they think their communication leader is an excellent leader.

7

TOP LEADERS AND TEAM MEMBERS SEE ORGANIZATION'S EFFORTS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION DIFFERENTLY

Organization's efforts on practicing diversity and inclusion showed satisfactory results based on the overall ratings. However, the view from the top is different from the bottom. The top leader group (i.e., Head of Corporate or Organizational Communication, or communication agency CEO) thought their organization is making good efforts in practicing diversity and inclusion (M = 5.8), but the lower-level employees, such as team members, disagreed (M = 5.39). At the same time, results showed organizations are not doing enough to share decision-making power with employees. In particular, female professionals rated the decision-making sharing function significantly lower than male professionals.

8

THE UNDENIABLE GENDER GAP ON JOB SATISFACTION

In 2018 NACM, female professionals reported a much lower level of satisfaction with their job, if compared to their male colleagues. Particularly, female professionals rated four conditions significantly lower, including:

- 1) The tasks are less interesting and challenging.
- 2) The job does not have a high status.
- 3) The salary is inadequate.
- 4) The career opportunities are less promising.

The reality of having low salary and minimal growth or advancement opportunities also contribute to female professionals' work stress and may threaten job security and stability.

9

FEMALES AND MALES HAVE DIFFERENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL SETS WHEN MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

It is not surprising to find that coping with the digital evolution and social media were rated as one of the top issues in 2018 NACM. Females and males see their knowledge and skill sets differently. Female communication professionals are more confident about their social media knowledge and skills in identifying social media trends (55.7%), delivering messages via social media (68.8%), and setting up social media platforms (51.2%). At the same time, male professionals reported they are better at understanding the legal framework for social media (38.0%) and using algorithms as provided by social media platforms to run analytics (35.7%).

10

GENDER GAPS ALSO EXIST IN DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL SETS

Female communication professionals reported significantly lower scores on three aspects as related to management skills and knowledge: 1) strategic positioning (such as analyze overall organizational goals, scenario planning; and linking communication to business agenda); 2) manage human resources (such as recruiting, developing and supporting people); and 3) manage financial resources (such as allocating and managing budgets and safeguarding assets).

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION...

**THE FULL REPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON AT
WWW.PLANKCENTER.UA.EDU**

**READ THE INFOGRAPHIC TODAY AT
WWW.PLANKCENTER.UA.EDU**

The NACM becomes part of the Global Communication Monitor Series in 2018. The Global Communication Monitor series covers more than 80 countries. It is the largest regular global study in the field of public relations and strategic communication with the aim to stimulate and promote the knowledge and practice of strategic communication and communication management globally. Similar surveys are conducted in other regions of the world: the Asia-Pacific Communication Monitor (since 2015), the European Communication Monitor (since 2007), and the Latin American Communication Monitor (since 2014/2015). More than 5,000 communication professionals from over 80 countries are surveyed in each wave of the Global Communication Monitor series. Since 2007, about 35,000 communication professionals worldwide working in diverse organizations have been surveyed. For more information about the Global Communication Monitor Series, please visit <http://www.globalcommunicationmonitor.com/>.

ORGANIZED BY:

