

# Pursuing Resilience

The Latest in Contemporary Business Communication

NO. 2



STRATEGY BY FISCHER LLC

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Welcome to the second issue of *Pursuing Resilience*, a Strategy by Fischer publication.

If there's a theme in this issue, it's disruption. You see it every day. The scope of the disruption can be found in the Alix Partners Disruption Index--the upheaval is expected to continue and is driven by tectonic forces.

So, you know these disruptions are coming.

Hopefully, you're thinking of thriving, not just surviving.

This is why I was so glad to include the content examples in the middle of the magazine. We are going to need to tell our stories better, more inclusively, and with more energy than we have ever imagined.

If we can back our values with action, keep our promises and be outstanding employers, we can help to prepare ourselves for the disruption that is coming our way. (For an example, see [strategybyfischer.com/resilient5](http://strategybyfischer.com/resilient5)).

Thanks to all of you who joined the conversation after Issue 1. Let's keep it going.

**B. J. FISCHER**  
President

**I WORK WITH LEADERS WHO ARE  
CONCERNED THEY AREN'T MAKING A BIG  
ENOUGH IMPACT ON THEIR COMPANY'S  
ABILITY TO FACE FUTURE CHANGE**

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## **ABOUT B. J. FISCHER**

B. J. Fischer has been part of a Silver Anvil award-winning project, along with winning a Diamond Award from the East Central District of PRSA, an EduAd Award and an Addy. He founded Strategy by Fischer to provide high-level counsel to clients. He is the Past-President of the Press Club of Toledo.

# Fortune Favors the Adapters



AlixPartners produces a report that they call the disruption index. The report includes a review of the disruptions as well as a survey of CEOs to see how they are feeling and reacting.

It is recommended reading. But bring your grown-up pants, because it is not going to make you feel good.

Beyond the more temporary disruptors we are feeling, the report identifies four tectonic disruptors that will impact the world—and therefore our business—in the coming years.

## The forces creating disruption are:

1. **Demographics**, as in the number of people who “produce” in an economy is declining “for the first time in modern times.”
2. **Deglobalization**, as in the retreat from the global trade regimen that was in existence during an extended period of prosperity.
3. **Technological acceleration**, which is changing our lives faster than we can manage—particularly as it relates to our values and ethics.
4. **Climate transition**, as in efforts to move our economy off fossil fuels. This part of the report is especially sobering. It is going to be far more difficult than people realize.

## CEOs in the survey are feeling the pain

- 94% expect their business model to change in the next three years
- 72% are worried about their jobs (Up from 52% in one year)
- 57% worry that their companies are not adapting fast enough

# 57%

of executives worry their  
company is not adapting fast  
enough to the pace of change

Source: Alix Partners



## Three takeaways... the communicator's perspective

01.

Internal communications is the new media relations

As I have written before, most people think that public relations is media relations. It is possible that in 10 years, they will think it is internal communication.

Here's why. There's a vein that runs throughout this report...talk of new business models in three years, not changing fast enough, companies too set in their ways, needing to initiate change, disrupting yourself, managing and surviving the climate transition, and emphasizing pace over perfection.

No one will thrive in this environment without a strong culture. Reaching that level will require a level of speed, clarity, and transparency that leaders have typically shunned. To add to the degree of difficulty, employees are craving stability and there is going to be less, not more. In a workforce shortage, retaining and engaging people is imperative. Put your cape on.

02.

Consumers are empowered

To add to the challenge, consumers are aware of their power and are "less forgiving." Companies have to meet these consumers where they are, which will include a lot of things, including consistent and granular communication ...about products, ESP, DE&I, the works.

*"It's becoming clearer than ever that power has permanently transferred from brands to consumers—but equally clear that many companies have not fully realized the extent of this shift."--AlixPartners*

03.

Growing through productivity will require new levels of workforce development and engagement

So, if we are only going to grow through productivity, we are going to need to make a higher investment in training and education. We may need to facilitate career shifts from employees mid-stream or mid-quarter. Companies could end up with virtual community colleges baked into their business model. And sure, much of it will be taught by professional teachers, but I see a lot of education about business models and change coming from the communication professionals.

**Last thing: I don't want to be the its-an-opportunity-not-a-problem guy.**

Because I actually can't stand that guy.

But in times of great change, fortune favors adapters. Those who don't adapt go away.

Be the adapter.



# Content

**Resilience All-Star #1**

**What I Liked:**

Normally, with an award like this one, the picture is a bunch of executives standing in front of a flat wall with awkward smiles. Highlighting an employee on the floor gives this validation story energy, authenticity and context.

**How it Builds Resilience**

- Builds the brand--more than machines
- Builds internal cohesion
- Identifies company as employee-centered, something research shows is being demanded
- Validation of the award is not lost.

**Resilience All-Star #2**

**What I Liked:**

One of the ways to build a resilient organization is to provide value to your stakeholders. This is a great example. That idea is enhanced by the fact that these ideas can be implemented right away. When they are, the value is reinforced.

**How it Builds Resilience**

- Adds value without selling
- Builds brand--Marketri's brand is growth
- Fun creative captures aspiration, not pain point
- Establishes actionable thought leadership

Best-in-class examples of how you can go just a little bit



# All-Stars



## What I Liked:

You see so many lame "xx history month" posts with platitudes and generic statements about equality or honoring contribution. How about taking your storytelling out for a spin, as with this post?

## How it Builds Resilience

- Uses storytelling to engage stakeholders
- Allows agency to highlight landing a big placement with a story, not a brag
- Builds affinity within the organization

**Identity**  
6,403 followers  
1mo •

Our #client Pinkerton was the first American detective agency to hire a woman investigator. Kate Warne holds a seminal place in history, having foiled a plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln, and there's speculation that she influenced the company's current motto, "We Never Sleep."

We worked closely with **Smithsonian Magazine** for this in-depth piece on Kate and her history-making role, including insights from Pinkerton's current vice president.

Read more about Kate: <https://lnkd.in/eKgsK9MK>

#LeaveAMark #clientwin #mediaplacement #mediarelations #storytelling #PR

Kate Warne, America's First Woman Detective • 2 pages



## What I Liked:

People expect to see more than empty earth day posts when they are evaluating a company's ESG. They expect examples and proof. Here, Magna gives the actions behind the words.

## How it Builds Resilience

- Demonstrates commitment in action
- Reinforces ESG commitment to internal and external stakeholders
- Builds "forward for all" brand beyond the product itself

**Suzanne Clark York** • 3rd+  
Global Director, Communications  
1mo •

Sustainability was a key focus when designing the facility. Energy optimization and control systems were implemented to minimize overall consumption and help reduce carbon footprint. The new 170,000 square foot facility produces feature rich-exterior mirror systems.

#WeAreMagna #MagnaGrowth #southcarolina #outsidemirrors #sustainability #energy

**Magna International**  
496,689 followers  
1mo •

News Release - Magna Celebrates Grand Opening of State-of-the-Art South Carolina Facility. Read the full release: <https://bit.ly/37ojDhC> #MagnaGrowth

Swamy Kotagiri Matthias Steck Steven Salvatore John O'Hara Tom Tomaszewski

beyond the ordinary content many organizations rely on



# PR's Climate Change: The Future of Media Relations

The tendency would be to title this “Is Media Relations Dead?” or “Is PR” Dead?” You can google either one—it’s not an original idea. And it’s (obviously) clickbait.

The better question is what role does media relations play in the practice of PR in the coming years?

The question is pertinent now for two reasons.

First, people are reading and viewing legacy media less. Therefore, media relations make a smaller impact.

There’s a bigger issue now. Trust in the media is way down. We were in media relations for the third-party validation in the first place, so if media isn’t trusted, why are we even bothering?

So what role does media relations play in the practice of PR in the coming years?

It’s no secret that the industry is moving to brand journalism and content marketing, along the like of the PESO model from Spin Sucks. (Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned.)

But media relations can still make an impact. Even if most people think PR is 100% media relations, we know it was always just a tool in the toolbox. And there are two ways that media relations can impact audiences.

I’d add a couple of thoughts.

## Media Relations provides SEO benefits

OK, “nobody” reads the paper. Whatever. But everyone Googles. And media hits about your brand are treated with great credibility in Google’s search results. They form an immediate impression of your story on page one of your search results. A bad story never goes away and neither does a good story.

## Media Relations Can Help Build Momentum

Media relations may not be effective in changing people’s minds—telling them the hard truths, convincing them you have changed, etc. What it can be useful for is helping to reinforce what people think or even build on it. It can help us channel energy, even if we can’t use it to turn the ship around.

## From the 2022 Edelman Trust Index

- 67% of respondents are “more convinced we’re being lied to by the news media.” (Emphasis added).
- There’s a political chasm, but even among Democrats trust in the media is only 55%.
- Media reports are viewed as less believable than something your employer tells you.
- Trust in media in the US fell 6% in the last year, to 39%, which is the 7th lowest in the world among studied countries.





# Welcome to the EX Era

**The business imperative to recruit and retain talent represents a great opportunity for communicators.**

## 01. It's Mostly Communications, but Not All

Poppulo notes that compensation still matters, along with training and development, and workplace flexibility. And communication. Just to note, this does not fall only on our shoulders.

## 02. You Probably Don't Understand What Your Employees Want (And You Need To)

McKinsey's research identified a clear "disconnect" between executives and employees. Knowing what your employees think is the first step to building a culture of psychological safety.

## 03. Retain employees like customers

What do you do with a customer you are trying to retain? You listen. You check-in. You engage. You try to act proactively, before there's a problem. That's what you need here.

## 04. Operational communications: more facts

Poppulo says that today's employee wants to have a fuller range of operational facts about the business. That's going to be a big shift for companies who have held employees way below a "need to know" basis. You will have to share the good news and bad news and then deal with the consequences of either.

### FROM POPPULO

#### "ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE RETENTION"

*"After decades of focus on customer experience (CX), organizations are now turning to employee experience (EX). After all, you need satisfied, engaged employees to deliver amazing CX."*

*"[EX requires] listening, probing, sense-making, making the complex simple, firefighting, counseling, crafting, visualizing, storytelling, influencing, and energizing."*

McKinsey found employees were far more likely to prioritize relational factors, including feeling valued by their manager and the overall organization, as well as feeling a sense of belonging.



# RIGHT SIDE UP: COMMUNICATION AS COST RECOVERY

As communicators, we have been conditioned to believe that the reason we don't get the resources and attention we need is that leaders don't see an ROI in communications. And we have spent a lot of time learning to demonstrate our ROI—with, I think we can agree, mixed success.

Maybe we are looking at this issue the wrong way. A recent study by Grammarly and the Harris Poll shows that poor communication could cost around \$12,506 per employee, per year.

In other words, maybe strong communications would be better positioned as cost-recovery, not ROI.

Here are a few things I gleaned from the report.

## **Poor Communication Costs Time**

The business leaders in the study estimated that almost 19% of a workweek was lost to poor communication. That should be a wow for anyone involved in this business. Even cutting that number in half with a strong communication effort would reduce waste significantly.

## **Poor Communication Costs Money**

Yes, poor communications cost money as well as time. I mean, cash money. 86% of business leaders reported losing more than \$10,000 in business to poor communication.

Business leaders also report losing deals because of a lack of confidence when communicating. Simply put, communication represents a leak in your corporation's cash bucket.

## **Intangible Costs: Focus and Momentum**

It's more than just money and time. There are intangible costs as well—which are not included in the study.

People who have to spend 8 hours a week making up for the damage poor communication causes are losing the ability to focus on more important issues. Call it opportunity cost if you went to business school.

Just as importantly, they are not going to create the flow and momentum that is part of effective work, especially in the knowledge arena. It's frustrating and it lowers morale and confidence in any strategic vision the company might be propagating.

## **Sadly, No Quick Fix**

The saddest story of them all. No, you can not remedy this problem by adding a position in communications.

The fix is for communication to be everyone's job.

That means creating systems. That means training everyone—especially supervisors—on communications skills. It means measurement and accountability. And it means openness and transparency from the C-suite (whomp, whomp), so everyone understands the business implications of their work.



## Muck Rack's State of Journalism 2022

Muck Rack's Annual State of Journalism is out. For my money, it is the best annual look at the media relations landscape from the position of the gatekeepers, which is the journalists.

We all know that things are not always rosy between us and them.

Three in five journalists say that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Only 8% say it is a partnership, which I don't think it even should be. One in six says we are a necessary evil.

### Companies/Pitchers are doing better

Last year, 61% of journalists said companies were "outdated" when sharing information. This year, it is only 44%, which is a remarkable step up but with room to grow.

### Journalists Want to be Shared

Almost two-thirds of journalists track how often their story is shared.

Therefore, it makes sense to pitch them more shareable stories.

How do you do that? Journalists say these four things are most likely to get their work shared.

- A trending story
- Contains an image or infographic
- Exclusive or surprising data
- Easily "localized," which by this we mean made relevant to the journalist's target audience

### The key takeaway

1:1 email is the top channel and it is not even remotely close.

Spray and pray won't get it done and might get you blocked.

# Resilient5 in Action

For more information:  
[www.resilient5.com](http://www.resilient5.com)



## **Trust**

D&I, Sustainability and employer brand dashboard

Regular CEO communications

Monitor and influence Google results

Use earned, paid and owned channels to tell story



## **Culture**

Tell employee stories internally and externally

Define culture with actions and not words

Stories of being a good employer help with all audiences



## **Engagement**

Build a strong employee experience

Build strategies for a comprehensive and segmented stakeholder manifest

Communicate on and off line with key stakeholders



## **Relevance**

Consistent content on why your organization matters to people

- Products
- Services
- Employment
- Community impact

Create partnerships that reflect shared values with your stakeholders



## **Common Understanding**

Proactive content on what people need to know

Use videos and infographics to explain difficult concepts

Remember vital messaging needs repetition

