



# Stay Calm & Carry On

Effectively Managing Public Crises

---



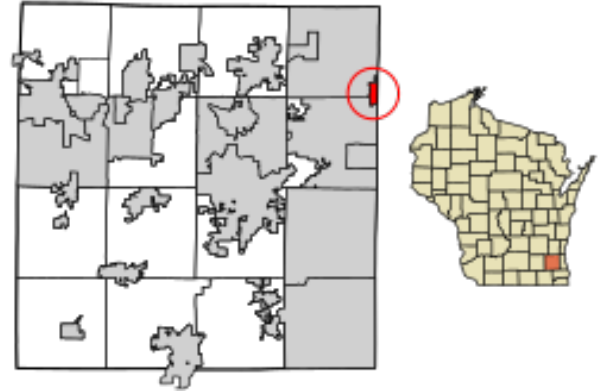
When One Accusation Becomes a Full-Blown Scandal

# **A CAUTIONARY TALE!**

# Where is Butler, Anyway?

---

- 1,800 residents, 10,000 daytime population due to 50% manufacturing tax base
- 0.78 sq. miles, surrounded by large communities:
  - ✓ Cities of Milwaukee & Brookfield
  - ✓ Villages of Menomonee Falls & Wauwatosa
- Full-service community (Police, Fire, DPW, Library, Parks/Rec, Admin)
- 20 FTE



# Complaint or Scandal?

---

In early 2013, two active Butler Police Officers filed a “whistleblower” complaint against then Chief of Police, alleging...

Viewing of  
pornography in  
department

Use of racist  
language &  
behavior

Use of fear &  
intimidation in  
supervising  
employees

...No further complaints lodged against other department employees.



# The Investigation

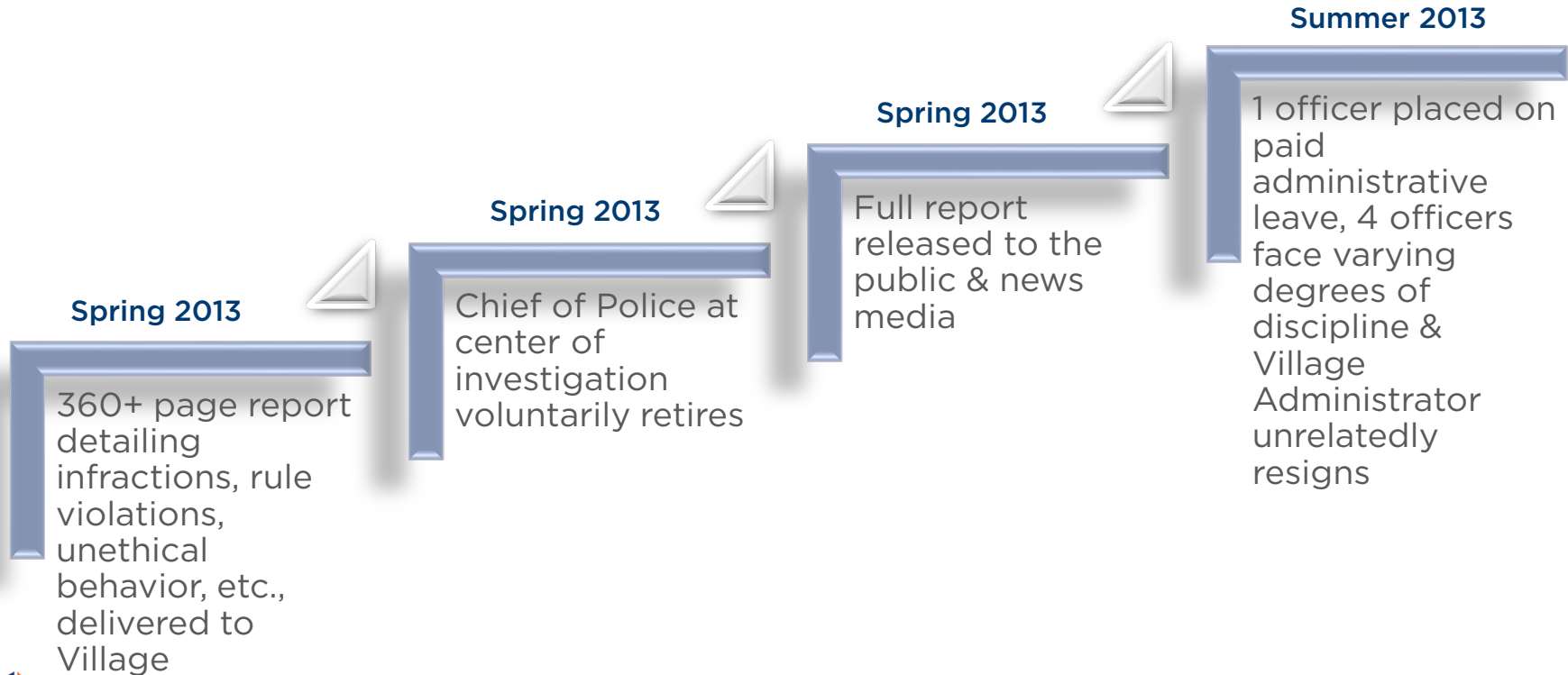
---

Village enlisted Waukesha County Sheriff's Department to interview all department employees & report findings



# Complaint or Scandal?

---



# Media Firestorm Ensues...

## Waukesha county NAACP asking for the Butler Police department to be disbanded



WISN

<https://www.wisn.com> › article › investigation-alleges-bu... ⋮

[Investigation alleges Butler officers 'regularly' viewed porn ...](#)



WISN

<https://www.wisn.com> › article › report-elements-of-racis... ⋮

[Report: Elements of racism, porn permeated Butler Police Dept.](#)



CBS58

<https://www.cbs58.com> › news › former-butler-board-m... ⋮

[Former Butler Board member speaks out about police ...](#)



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

<https://archive.jsonline.com> › news › crime › butler-p... ⋮

[Report details misconduct within Butler Police Department](#)



WISN

<https://www.wisn.com> › article › new-details-revealed... ⋮

[New details revealed in Butler Police Department scandal](#)

# Oh, By The Way....

---

- Summer 2013: Waukesha County informs Village President there is reason to believe at least one officer conducted serious criminal activity while on duty, including felony misconduct
- WCSO then informs Village it will independently investigate criminal details discovered during investigation & may refer charges to District Attorney's office



# The Aftermath & More

---

**April - September 2013**

- No Chief of Police

**November 2013 - January 2014**

- No Village Administrator

**September 2013**

- New Chief of Police sworn in

**January 20 ,2014**

- Yours truly begins as Village Administrator

# The Aftermath & More

---

## Federal Lawsuit #1 Filed February 18, 2014

- Filed by ‘whistleblower’ officers
- Alleges retaliation, emotional distress, loss of pay, rank, etc.
- During litigation, one of the plaintiffs tragically dies

## Federal Lawsuit #2 Filed May 8, 2014

- Filed by individual arrested years earlier by one of the “whistleblower” officers
- Alleges excessive use of force in 2011 OWI arrest

# The Aftermath & More

---

Village dropped by liability insurance carrier in late 2016

Both lawsuits settle out of court in late 2017 & early 2018

Implemented transparency & accountability practices for Police Department

Established Village-wide annual harassment & sensitivity training

Overhauled policy manual, employee manual, hiring practices & background checks

# Challenges & Lessons Learned

---

- Know your employees' rights
  - ✓ Garrity Warnings, etc.
- Unclear path & differing opinions
  - ✓ No Police or Fire Commission
  - ✓ Differing opinions between Village Labor Attorney & Village Attorney
  - ✓ Multiple insurance appointed attorneys who weren't necessarily working in best interest of Village.
  - ✓ Delay in discipline of other officers



# Challenges & Lessons Learned

---

Bad actors are  
still human  
beings

- They have families
- They're hurting too

Find a  
confidant you  
know you can  
trust

- Control emotions, frequently communicate
- Create an "inner circle"

Take care of  
yourself

- Seek help from professionals, friends, family & colleagues
- Voice your fears & make others aware

# Challenges & Lessons Learned

---

- Tell your story or it will be told for you!
  - ✓ Invest time & resources into both internal & external communications
  - ✓ Develop a clear & concise communications strategy
    - Assign a point person to communicate with public & media
    - Be honest but guarded in what you say; it can and will be used against you!
- Develop relationships with news media now! Don't wait until you have a scandal on your hands...

EHLERS | MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

# COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

Local Governments

2.16.24



MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

# NICE TO MEET YOU



Our teams are **custom-built to serve each client**, ensuring the right mix of skills, personalities and background knowledge to get the job done. We strive to be an extension of your team, fitting in seamlessly to support your communication strategies and brainstorming out-of-the-box ways to achieve your goals.

What makes us unique is our deep bench strength. **Someone will always be available to you to answer a question or respond to a request, 24/7, 365 days a year.**

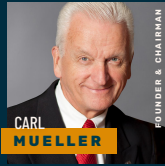




LORI  
RICHARDS



JAMES  
MADLOM



CARL  
MUELLER



ELIZABETH  
HUMNITZSCH



ANDY  
LEDUC



PHILL  
TREWYN



MIA  
TRUPI



CHRISTIE  
WOLFE



MARY  
JESSEN



CASS  
BERGEMANN



CHRIS  
NELSON



TOYA  
WASHINGTON



AARON  
STERN



JENNIFER  
MORTON



LAURA  
KELLER



KAT  
BEST



KRISTA  
RUEHMER



CHELSEA  
CROSS



ANGELA  
OHLINGER



KEVIN  
KOCCHI



DEANN  
OLSON



LAUREN  
GEORGE



JEREMY  
TREUDEN



ANNA  
WILLKOMM



TEA  
TETTING



AKASH  
PUNNOOSE



MARK  
CURRAN



ERIKA  
QUINONEZ



MADDIE  
KREBS



LUCAS  
JOHNSON



KAITLYN  
BROSS



MAYA  
FIDZIUKIEWICZ



NATASHA  
BIVINS



CARA  
VONDERWELL



KATIE  
DARRAGH



HALLIE  
HATCH



VERONICA  
POPE



AMELIA  
VELAGAS



GINNY  
CZARNECKI



KIRSTEN  
MUELLER

# MEET TEAM MUELLER

Our deep bench of big picture thinkers, detail-oriented doers and creative problem solvers are **the best in the business.**





# STRATEGY

## AT THE CENTER OF ALL WE DO

Everyone has a story to tell and challenges to overcome. Whether you have good news to promote or a challenging situation to manage, we have the right team to be your strategic partners.

At Mueller Communications, there is no “one size fits all.” We tailor our approach to each individual client, circumstance and initiative, leveraging decades of experience in public relations, marketing, website development and creative design.

At Mueller Communications, we take a 360° approach to communications to ensure the **right message** is delivered to the **right audience** at the **right time**.



# OUR SERVICES

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

The most valuable reputation builder is not what you say about yourself, but what others say about you. What are they saying? Are you listening? It's time to drive the narrative.

- Communications Audit
- Messaging & Content
- Crisis Communications & Reputation Management
- Media Relations
- Spokesperson Training
- Events
- Influencer Targeting
- Thought Leadership
- Public Affairs & Community Engagement
- Employee Engagement & Change Management

## MARKETING

Cut through the noise with innovative tactics that effectively target and connect with your niche audience, taking them on a carefully crafted journey that drives action and return on investment.

- Marketing Strategy & Plan Creation
- Branding
- Message & Collateral Development
- Content Marketing
- Programmatic Display, CTV, Digital Video & Audio
- Search Engine Management (SEM)
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Social Media
- Email & Marketing Automation
- Influencer Marketing
- B2B Marketing
- Traditional Media

## CREATIVE

You're only as good as you look until they meet you. Once you have a compelling story, let our in-house creative team help you tell it in a visually compelling way.

- Visual Branding
- Website Design
- Online Creative
- Print & Collateral Creative
- Experiential Creative
- Product/Package Design
- Video & Photography

## WEBSITES

At Mueller, we work to build websites that meet your unique needs, whether you're seeking to generate leads for your business, sell a product, or familiarize an audience with your brand and story, your online presence is critical to the mission of your organization.

- Storytelling Website
- Lead Generation Website
- Ecommerce Website



# MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS OUR CLIENTS

Mueller Communications provides high-level communications strategy and support to a wide range of organizations across Wisconsin. Below is a sampling of representative Mueller clients:





# WORKSHOP

# POLL TIME

## Have you been involved in a crisis situation?

- Does your municipality have a crisis communications plan?
- Have you undergone training to “test drive” your crisis communications plan?



**We want this to be a dialogue. Please ask questions as we go!**

Resources available at [muellercommunications.com/league](https://muellercommunications.com/league)



**The importance  
of planning**



**What to do when a  
crisis hits**



**Lessons  
learned: case  
studies**

# AGENDA



# **IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING**



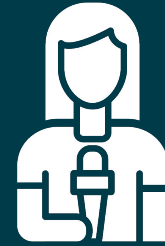
# FOLLOWING OUR MEDIA PROTOCOL

Media inquiries must be responded to in a way that is clear, concise, accurate and timely to help ensure the media reports accurate information and offers a balanced view of the issue.

## What to do if you are approached by the media:

- Ask for the names and affiliations of the individual
- Say: "I am sorry, the person you should speak with is not available at this time. Please give me your name and number and the appropriate person will get back to you promptly."
- Report the contact to the appropriate spokesperson

Download a sample media protocol at [muellercommunications.com/league](https://muellercommunications.com/league)



A media protocol is not meant to stifle an employee's right to speak to the media, but is **designed to ensure that comments made to the media are timely and accurate.**



# HOW TO ADDRESS SOCIAL MEDIA

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- How are you monitoring social media mentions?
- Do you have a protocol in place for when and how to respond?
- Who has control of your platforms?
- Are you taking simple steps to protect your accounts from hijacking?



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

# CRISIS SEVERITY

Crisis severity is tied to the “lead time” you will have in preparing your response and the likelihood that a member of the media will show up on site.

**LEVEL 1: MOST SEVERE** Workplace homicide, accidental workplace death, serious injury, violence

**LEVEL 2: SEVERE** Major damage, building accident, weather disaster

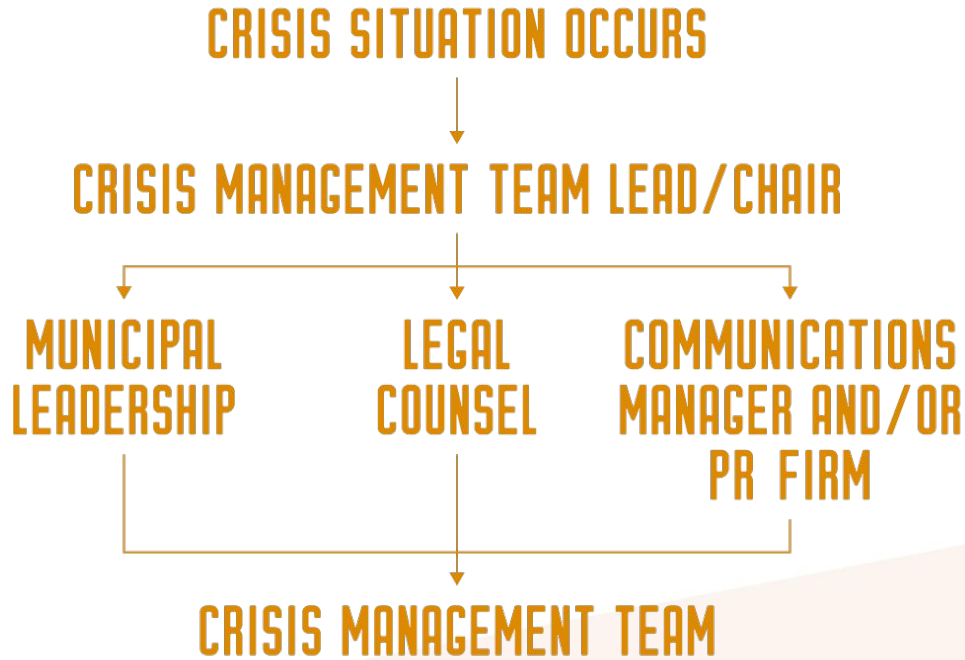
**LEVEL 3: MODERATE** Breach of confidential information, personal / sexual assault allegations, major burglary

**LEVEL 4: MINOR** Delay in delivery of services / products, leave of absence, loss of equipment



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

# CONTACT TREE



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

# CRISIS CHECKLIST



## CRISIS CHECKLIST

The following crisis communications checklist is applicable for Crisis Levels 1-2, except as otherwise noted. For Crisis Levels 3-4, contact the CMT chairperson, who will provide further direction on activities.

### FIRST 10 MINUTES

- Call Emergency Response and enact Disaster preparedness procedures (if applicable)
- Secure site, employees, performers, audience and community members
- Alert CEO/Spokesperson
- Assemble CMT
- Assess situation and level of impact
- Notify switchboard/operator(s) to direct media calls to Mueller Communications
- CMT begins collecting information for initial standby statement

### FIRST 30 MINUTES

## PLAN AHEAD

Work ahead to develop a checklist of tasks to complete in the first moments of a crisis.





# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

# KEY PLANNING TOOLS

Crisis severity is tied to the “lead time” you will have in preparing your response and the likelihood that a member of the media will show up on site.



**TEMPLATE  
COMMUNICATIONS  
MATERIALS**



**STAKEHOLDER  
CONTACT  
INFORMATION**



**ACCOUNT  
INFORMATION**



# WHEN A CRISIS HITS



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

## WHAT TO EXPECT



**Uncertainty is high; information in high demand**



**"Facts" may change rapidly**



**Resources pulled from day-to-day operations**



**Stakeholder trust is threatened**



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.** - Warren Buffett

**Put people first**

**Show empathy and compassion**

**Respond quickly and accurately**

**Be as transparent as possible**

**Become the trusted source of information – let all audiences hear from you first**

**When appropriate, follow the authorities' lead**



**Surviving the first hours of a crisis or high publicity incident sets the tone**

**Handling a situation insensitively or not at all can escalate visibility, costs or damage**

**How you handle a crisis has a residual effect on every aspect of your reputation – now and in the future. When poorly handled, crises can destroy reputations.**

**Outsiders, not you, will control the perceptions of how you handled the situation**

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

**LEADERSHIP MATTERS**



## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE

# KEEP AUDIENCES IN MIND

There are many stakeholders / audiences to consider when developing a communications approach in a crisis.

- 1. ELECTED OFFICIALS**
- 2. EMPLOYEES**
- 3. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**
- 4. MEDIA**
- 5. INTERESTED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS / ADVOCATES / ASSOCIATIONS**



# DOs



**Show concern**

**Speak with one voice**

**Take charge quickly**

**Be open and responsive**

**Stick to the facts**

**Share important information in simple, declarative sentences**

**Keep your cool**

**Correct mistakes**

**Address the perception**

**Clearly state actions being taken**

**Say “no comment”**

**Speculate, predict or answer hypothetical questions**

**Give long, rambling answers**

**Lose your temper**

**Get into a debate**

**Say anything “off the record”**

**Evade, cover up or block access to other sources of information**

**Try to answer a question you don’t know the answer**

**Assume anything**

# DON'Ts



EMPLOYEE & PUBLIC

# EXPECTATIONS

It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.

– Warren Buffett

- 1. DON'T FORGET ABOUT EMPLOYEES**
- 2. RESPOND RATHER THAN REACT**
- 3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**
- 4. VISIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS**
- 5. IDENTIFY ACTION YOU'RE TAKING**





THE NEW REALITY

# THE CHANGING MEDIA

## JOURNALISTS ARE OVERWHELMED & OVERWORKED

Globally, **33%** of  
journalists publish  
**7+** articles a week.

Source: Cision's 2019 Global State of the Media Report

## JOURNALISTS ARE MAKING METRICS- BASED DECISIONS

**65%** agree that the  
availability of audience  
metrics like views and  
engagement has changed  
the way journalists  
evaluate their stories.



# CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY | CITY OF OSHKOSH



# ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTAL

**The City of Oshkosh discovered a neighborhood built adjacent to and on top of a former landfill may have explosive levels of methane gas building up.**

The City knew they could *technically* resolve the problem, but was concerned about the communication necessary to obtain quick permission to inspect private property.

Concerned about triggering panic among property owners and tenants of the neighborhood, the municipality partnered with Mueller Communications.



# THE APPROACH

**THE GOAL:** An intentional, in-person and high-touch approach that insured neighbors were quickly informed with consistent information.

## Neighborhood canvassing

- Door-to-door outreach
- Comprehensive leave-behind materials including FAQs

## Immediate access to Fire Department to test Methane levels

- Installation of detection system OR expedited to address methane levels

## Standby media materials for use upon inquiry



## CASE STUDY | CITY OF OSHKOSH

# THE RESULTS

**WITHIN 1 WEEK,  
CANVASSING TEAMS  
MADE CONTACT WITH  
ALL PROPERTY OWNERS**

**QUICK ACTION WAS TAKEN  
TO TEST, AND IF  
NECESSARY, MITIGATE  
AND METHANE LEVELS**

**NO MEDIA ATTENTION**



# ISSUE: EMBEZZLEMENT

After discovering a long-time employee had been using a City-issued credit card to purchase personal items, the City of Oshkosh knew it needed a communications strategy to proactively address the issue, highlight the steps taken to remedy the issue and reassure the public that the issue was isolated, and that proper precautions were in place to ensure it did not happen again.



# THE APPROACH

**THE GOAL:** Be proactive, open and honest. Illustrate commitment of leadership to ensure it doesn't happen again.

**Create alerts to monitor media and community dialogue**

**Identify stakeholders and develop an outreach timeline and necessary materials / messaging**

- Elected officials
  - Provide them with information to share with constituents
- Employees

**Conduct proactive outreach to local media**



## CASE STUDY | CITY OF OSHKOSH

# THE RESULTS

**THE CITY CAME ACROSS AS PROACTIVE, TRANSPARENT, WILLING AND ABLE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE**

**IT WAS A SHORT MEDIA CYCLE ISSUE**

**IT WAS NOT A MAJOR COMMUNITY ISSUE**





# ISSUE: POLICE BRUTALITY

## HYPOTHETICAL ISSUE:

Following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer, a member of the local police department takes to social media to post his thoughts on the matter. His statement is insensitive and leads many to question his bias and beliefs related to police brutality – especially against people of color.



# SAMPLE APPROACH

**ASSESS** whether the statements are “protected” under the First Amendment

**COLLECT** background information on the individual

- Is there a history of excessive force? Has the individual been disciplined in the past for related issues?

**TRACK** social and traditional media coverage

- Flag issues / questions / concerns raised in the community and determine how to address them

**BE PREPARED** to communicate

- Within the Police Department
- With elected officials (and in turn, their constituents)
- With the media



# SAMPLE STATEMENT

Make clear the Department's view of the use of excessive force that led to George Floyd's death: **Condemn it as unacceptable.**

Explain **immediate action** taken by the Department when learning of the social media post – and the findings: We launched an internal investigation, the results of which found that...

Explain the Officer's **legal right** to express his opinion while off-duty and with his personal social media account.

Make clear **what would happen if an officer acted in a biased or racist manner while representing the City**

Present the Department's **commitment to the community** and to addressing the issue of structural racism.



# SAMPLE STATEMENT

“As a Department, we condemn the excessive force that led to George Floyd’s death and consider it action unacceptable by anyone, but particularly officers who have sworn an oath to serve and protect.

Officer Smith’s response on social media to this video was both grossly insensitive and uninformed. Upon learning of his comments, we immediately took action. The Department initiated an investigation, in consultation with the City’s Human Resources Department and General Counsel, to determine whether the comments represented a violation of Department policy as well as whether Officer Smith had a history of excessive use of force and/or any biased behavior toward people of color.

The investigation determined that ... [Conclusory statement, based on findings of investigation]

While Officer Smith’s statement was incorrect, insensitive and inconsistent with the standard of behavior we expect from all of our officers, it was made off-duty and with his personal social media account. A thorough review by our legal counsel and the Department’s Human Resources staff determined that it is within Officer Smith’s rights to express this opinion and the Department does not have the right to punish or discipline him for it.

As always, we take any allegation or suspicion of wrongdoing by a member of the Department extremely seriously. The Department does not condone excessive or inappropriate use of force, and will not tolerate its officers or employees acting in a biased or racist manner while representing the City. Doing so would result in immediate investigation and, pending results, termination of employment.

As a country, a community and a Department, we know we can do better to directly address the structural racism that has impacted our society for generations. Our commitment is to repair and strengthen our relationships throughout our community - especially communities of color - as we fulfill our mission to serve and protect.

If you have any concerns about police conduct, I encourage you to reach out to the Department or the Police and Fire Commission.”

MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

# QUESTIONS?

USE THE Q&A FUNCTION TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS

---

LEARN MORE AT:

[www.muellercommunications.com/league](http://www.muellercommunications.com/league)



# Your Presenters

---



**Kayla Thorpe**  
Senior Financial Specialist  
[kthorpe@ehlers-inc.com](mailto:kthorpe@ehlers-inc.com)  
(262) 796-6197



**James Madlom**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mueller Communications  
[jmadlom@muellercommunications.com](mailto:jmadlom@muellercommunications.com)

# Important Disclosures

---

Ehlers is the joint marketing name of the following affiliated businesses (collectively, the “Affiliates”): Ehlers & Associates, Inc. (“EA”), a municipal advisor registered with the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (“MSRB”) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”); Ehlers Investment Partners, LLC (“EIP”), an SEC registered investment adviser; and Bond Trust Services Corporation (“BTS”), a holder of a limited banking charter issued by the State of Minnesota.

Where an activity requires registration as a municipal advisor pursuant to Section 15B of the Exchange Act of 1934 (Financial Management Planning and Debt Issuance & Management), such activity is or will be performed by EA; where an activity requires registration as an investment adviser pursuant to the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 (Investments and Treasury Management), such activity is or will be performed by EIP; and where an activity requires licensing as a bank pursuant to applicable state law (paying agent services shown under Debt Issuance & Management), such activity is or will be performed by BTS. Activities not requiring registration may be performed by any Affiliate.

This communication does not constitute an offer or solicitation for the purchase or sale of any investment (including without limitation, any municipal financial product, municipal security, or other security) or agreement with respect to any investment strategy or program. This communication is offered without charge to clients, friends, and prospective clients of the Affiliates as a source of general information about the services Ehlers provides. This communication is neither advice nor a recommendation by any Affiliate to any person with respect to any municipal financial product, municipal security, or other security, as such terms are defined pursuant to Section 15B of the Exchange Act of 1934 and rules of the MSRB. This communication does not constitute investment advice by any Affiliate that purports to meet the objectives or needs of any person pursuant to the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 or applicable state law.

# APPENDIX





# **WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**



- 1. BE PREPARED**
- 2. DON'T REPEAT NEGATIVES**
- 3. BE CLEAR, CONCISE, HONEST**
- 4. FORGET "NO COMMENT"**
- 5. AVOID "OFF THE RECORD"**
- 6. LISTEN TO QUESTIONS**
- 7. SUPPORT YOUR MESSAGE**
- 8. WORK WITH REPORTER**
- 9. MAKE SURE SETTING IS APPROPRIATE**
- 10. APPEARANCE COUNTS**

# TOP 10 TIPS



# SETTING THE AGENDA

**REVIEW YOUR KEY MESSAGES PRIOR TO INTERVIEW**

## **THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING WHEN REVIEWING YOUR MESSAGES:**

- What quote or headline would you like to see?
- What is your 7-second sound bite?
- What is the bottom line message you want to deliver
- What keywords / statements summarize your perspective?



**Before you talk to a reporter, establish your agenda**

**Talk in plain terms; don't use legalistic or technical language**

**Front-load strong points**

**Utilize bridging and transition skills**

**Make it relevant to the listener**

**Finally, deliver the sound bite**

# **MAXIMIZING QUOTABILITY**



**Succinct**

**Delivered with passion**

**Lacks jargon**

**Vivid example that paints a picture**

**Analogies, stories and metaphors**

**A GOOD QUOTE**



**Buries the key message / conclusion**

**Stays high-level and abstract**

**Is longer than 30 seconds**

**Uses jargon and technical language**

**Talks about the process without being prompted**

**Doesn't paint any visual pictures**

**Lacks energy and passion**

**Leaves the reporter asking, "who cares?"**

**A BAD QUOTE**



# IDEAL ANSWER

PEOPLE OFTEN TELL STORIES WITH  
A SLOW BUILD AND A BIG FINISH



MEDIA HEADLINES REVEAL THE  
BIG IDEA AND THEN FILL IN DETAILS



# BRIDGING

(I DON'T REALLY WANT TO GO THERE)

**EXAMPLES:**

Let me put that question in perspective...

That's an interesting question, but the real issue is...



**EXAMPLES:**

I'm glad you asked that question, because...

What's most important for you to remember is...

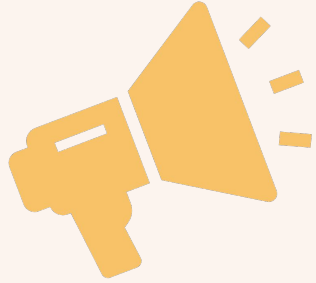
(HERE IT COMES!)

# FLAGGING





# Constitutional Considerations



## FIRST AMENDMENT

A public employee does not relinquish their First Amendment Rights to comment on matters of public interest by virtue of government employment.



## DUE PROCESS

Protecting the rights of persons who may be accused to a fair trial.



## PRIVACY INTERESTS

Protecting reasonable expectations of privacy, including victim rights.

# THE STATE OF THE MEDIA

## WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR JOURNALISM IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



27% ▼  
**Maintaining credibility**

AS A TRUSTED NEWS SOURCE /  
COMBATING ACCUSATIONS OF  
"FAKE NEWS"

20% ▲  
**Lack of staffing  
and resources**

20% ▲  
**Declining advertising  
and circulation revenues**

19% ▲  
**Rise of  
social networks  
and influencers bypassing  
traditional media**

11%  
**Blurring lines  
between editorial and advertising**

Ensuring content is accurate is a  
**top priority among journalists  
and their organizations.**

### **WHERE DOES TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION COME FROM?**

**NEWSWIRES** 27%  
AP, Bloomberg, PR Newswire

**INDUSTRY EXPERTS** 23%

**PRESS RELEASES** 20%



# THE STATE OF THE MEDIA

## WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE AS A JOURNALIST IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



38%

**Keeping up**

AMID DOWNSIZING AND REDUCED RESOURCES

22%

**Balancing reporting**

ON IMPORTANT TOPICS AGAINST PRESSURE  
TO DRIVE BUSINESS

13%

**Battling misinformation**

### MAINTAINING ACCURACY

*"Actual fake news..when stories are published without identified, credible sources."*

### PERCEPTION AS A TRUSTED NEWS SOURCE

*"Liability issues, like if another news publisher publishes something with inaccurate facts and we use that, we are also liable."*

### RISE OF AI AND CHATGPT

### ONGOING INDUSTRY LAYOFFS



TRUST &

# PUBLIC PERCEPTION

TRUST IN NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA HAS DIMINISHED.

**50%** believe national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public to adopt a particular point of view through their reporting.

**52%** disagreed that disseminators of national news “care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners.”

Fortune, February 2023

POLITICS · DISINFORMATION

## Trust in media is so low that half of Americans now believe that news organizations deliberately mislead them

BY DAVID BAUDER AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

February 15, 2023 at 1:13 PM CST

On a scale of 0 to 10, survey response indicate rank trust in the media is

**4.4**



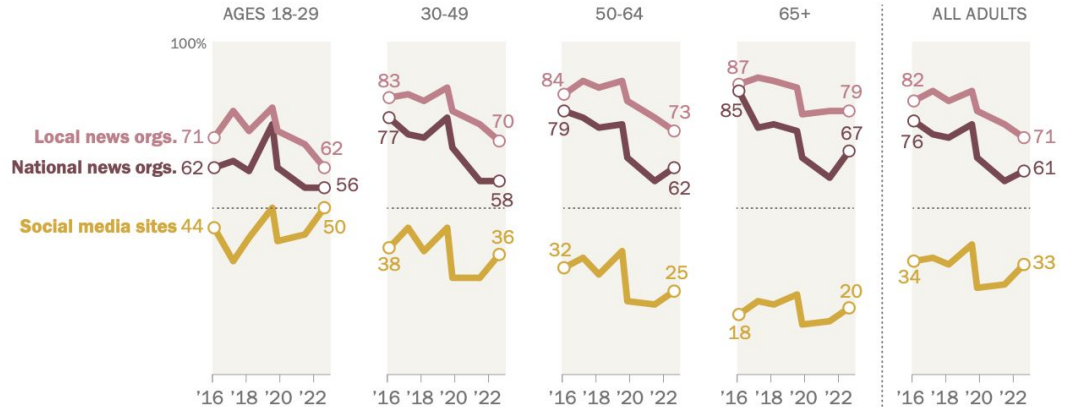
CHANGING

# MEDIA LANDSCAPE

LOCAL NEWS RANKS HIGHEST FOR TRUST.

Those  
**UNDER 30**  
TRUST SOCIAL MEDIA  
nearly as much as national news.

% of U.S. adults who say they have **some or a lot of trust** in the information they get from ...



Note: In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on internet-using U.S. adults. In the question on trust in the information from social media sites, the examples used have changed over time; for more detail on the specific wording, see the topline. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 18-Aug. 21, 2022. For dates of other surveys, see the topline.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

PEW Research, October 2022



CHANGING

# MEDIA LANDSCAPE

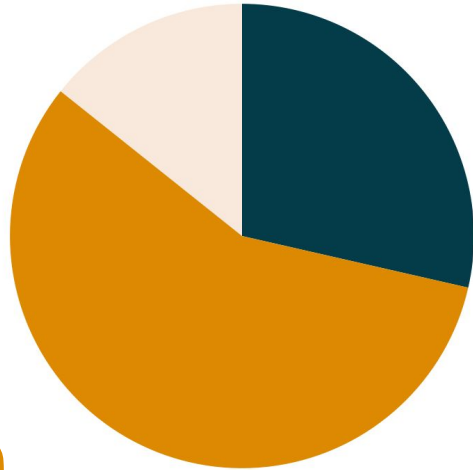
WHICH DO YOU TRUST MORE - TRADITIONAL MEDIA OR SOCIAL MEDIA?

BOTH/EQUAL

14%

TRADITIONAL

57%



NEITHER

29%



# CHANGING (SOCIAL) MEDIA LANDSCAPE

**MISINFORMATION** spreads faster than the truth.

- False news reaches people **6x faster** than the truth (MIT 2018)
- Falsehoods are **70% more likely to be retweeted** than the truth (MIT 2018)

**INFLUENCERS AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES** shape how people form opinions and get questions answered.

- **37 percent of consumers** trust social media influencers over brands (2022)
- Gen Z and Millennials are **2x more likely** than Boomers to trust influencers
- **80 percent of job seekers** that read reviews say their perception of a company improves after seeing an employer respond to a review. (2019)

**Social media  
sparks further  
concerns of**

**TRUST**

**ACCURACY**

**WHAT IS A  
RELIABLE SOURCE  
OF INFORMATION**



# STATE OF THE MEDIA





**Broad population impact**

**Local relevance**

**Emotional connection**

**Topic is timely**

**Selling papers and driving ratings**

**5 w's: who, what, when, where, why**

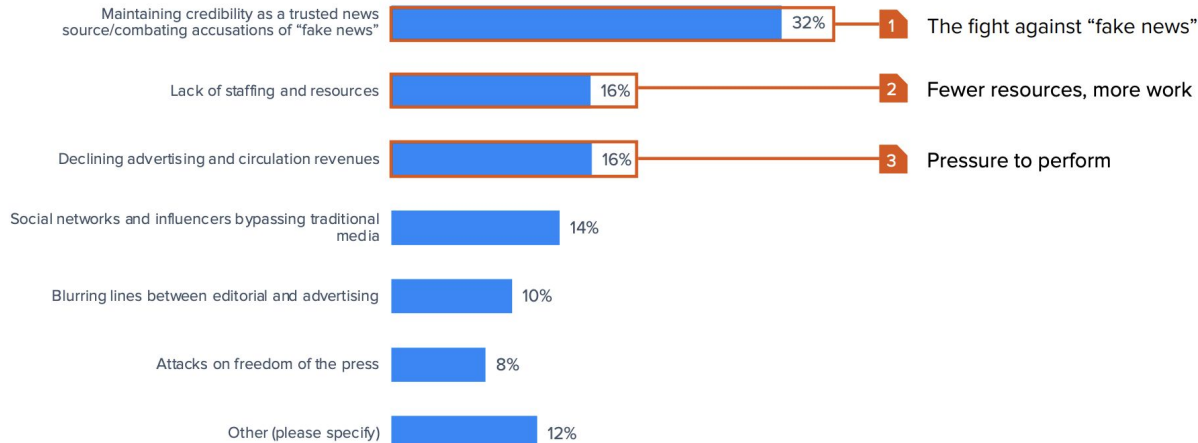
**WHAT MAKES NEWS**



# THE STATE OF THE MEDIA

## OBSTACLES FACING JOURNALISTS

What do you believe was the biggest challenge for journalism in the last 12 months?



### STATS:

#### FIGHTING "FAKE NEWS"

61% of journalists say the public has lost trust in the media over the past year

#### FEWER RESOURCES

30% of journalists file 10+ stories a week

#### PRESSURE TO PERFORM

Advertising dollars are dwindling, making clicks and audience relevance even more crucial



# THE STATE OF THE MEDIA

## UNCERTAIN ECONOMY & DECLINING AD REVENUE

### EDITORIAL LAYOFFS, CUTS AND HIRING FREEZES:

**CNN** and **Gannett** laid off hundreds in early December

**BuzzFeed** let go 12% of workforce

**NPR** announced near total hiring freeze as part of cost-cutting measures

**Associated Press** is offering early retirement to 200 staffers

**Washington Post** cuts award-winning Sunday magazine

MEDIA

LAYOFFS AND HIRING FREEZES: MEDIA  
INDUSTRY ENDS 2022 WITH BAD NEWS FOR  
JOURNALISTS

### Concern as US media hit with wave of layoffs amid rise of disinformation

Wider economic uncertainty is behind cuts at companies including CNN, BuzzFeed and Gannett, executives say

## REMAINING JOURNALISTS ARE OFTEN:

Overwhelmed

Overworked

Rushed

Inexperienced in their  
"beat" or subject area



# THE IMPLICATIONS

## THE MUELLER TEAM HAS SEEN IT FIRST HAND:

### BROKEN EMBARGOS:

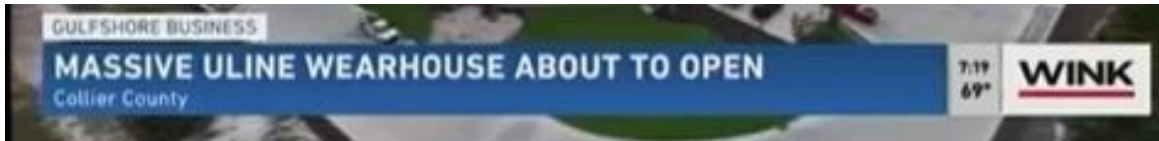
- Information released 24 hours early by one of four outlets that received the embargo.

### CORRECTION REQUESTS:

- Inaccurate information reported because the reporter misread the press release and pulled data from old press releases.

### INADEQUATE TIME TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS:

- Reporter emailed for comment at 8:40pm before airing her story on the 10pm broadcast.



## WHY?

Lean staff is stretched thin, resulting in a lack of time and attention to detail.

Reporters are too rushed to proofread, fact check for accuracy, or follow best practices.

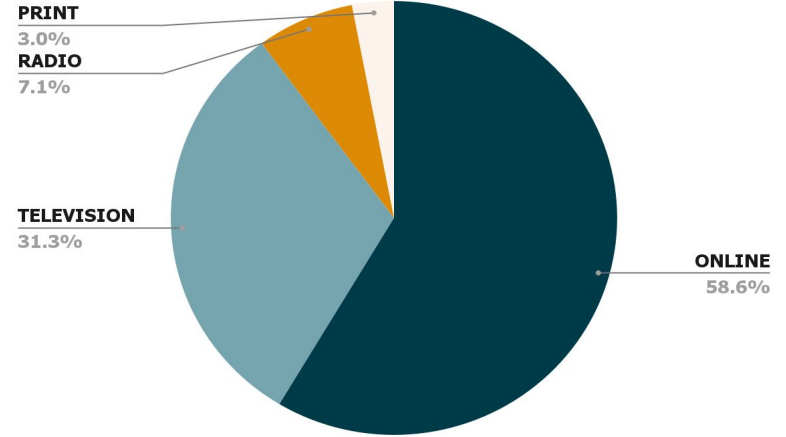
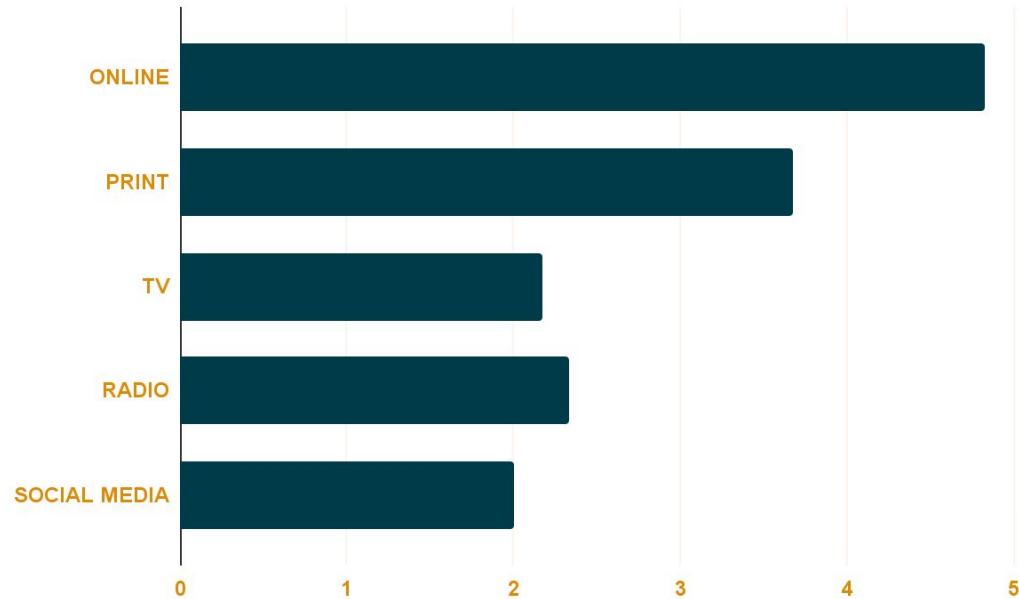
## SO WHAT?

PR and marketing teams are stepping up to fill the void, make corrections and keep media accountable.



SURVEY SAID...

# HOW YOU GET NEWS



# TRUST & PUBLIC PERCEPTION

TRUST IN NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA HAS DIMINISHED.

**50%** believe national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public to adopt a particular point of view through their reporting.

**52%** disagreed that disseminators of national news "care about the best interests of their readers, viewers and listeners."

Fortune, February 2023

POLITICS · DISINFORMATION

## Trust in media is so low that half of Americans now believe that news organizations deliberately mislead them

BY DAVID BAUDER AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

February 15, 2023 at 1:13 PM CST

On a scale of 0 to 100, survey response indicate rank trust in the media is

**36**



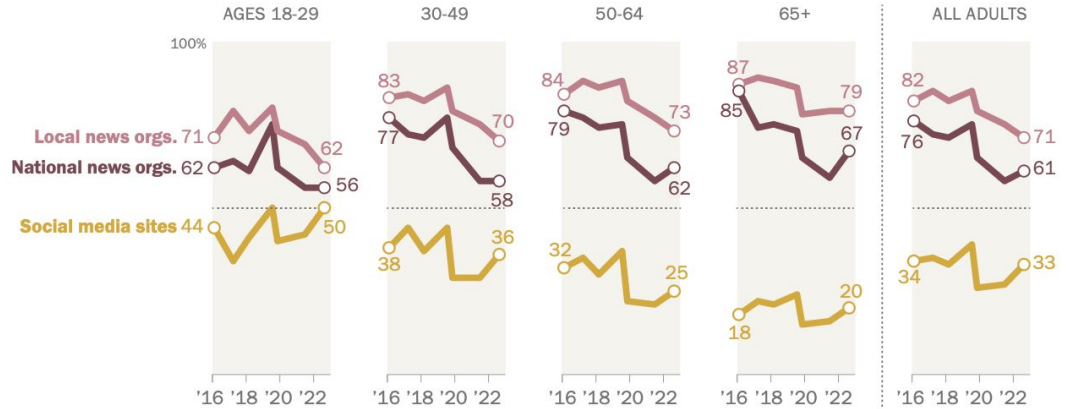
CHANGING

# MEDIA LANDSCAPE

LOCAL NEWS RANKS HIGHEST FOR TRUST.

Those **UNDER 30** TRUST SOCIAL MEDIA nearly as much as national news.

% of U.S. adults who say they have **some or a lot of trust** in the information they get from ...



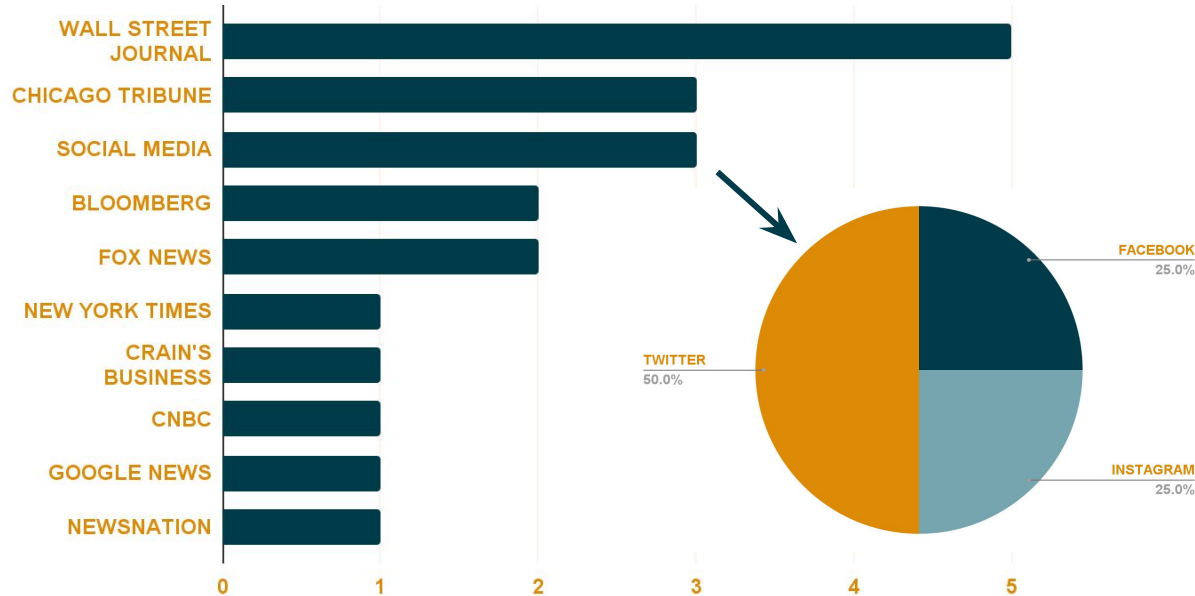
Note: In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on internet-using U.S. adults. In the question on trust in the information from social media sites, the examples used have changed over time; for more detail on the specific wording, see the topline. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 18-Aug. 21, 2022. For dates of other surveys, see the topline.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



SURVEY SAID...

# WHERE YOU GET NEWS



## PODCASTS

The Daily

Up First

What's News (WSJ)





# CHANGING (SOCIAL) MEDIA LANDSCAPE

**INFORMATION OVERLOAD** has resulted from the rapid news cycle, availability of information at your fingertips (in your pocket) and increased number of news sources.

→ **61% say it's hard to stay informed** ([Fortune, 2023](#))

**MISINFORMATION** spreads faster than the truth.

→ **False news reaches people 6x faster than the truth** ([MIT 2018](#))

→ **Falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted than the truth** ([MIT 2018](#))

**INFLUENCERS AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES** shape how people form opinions and get questions answered.

→ **37 percent of consumers trust social media influencers over brands** ([2022](#))

→ **Gen Z and Millennials are 2x more likely than Boomers to trust influencers**

→ **80 percent of job seekers that read reviews say their perception of a company improves after seeing an employer respond to a review.** (2019)

**5 OF 6**

of survey responses indicated

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**MAKES THEM**

**MORE UNEASY**

than traditional media because of:

DISINFORMATION

BIASED COMMENTARY

ECHO CHAMBER

DON'T KNOW/TRUST  
AUTHORS/PUBLISHERS



**STRIKING THE  
CAREFUL BALANCE**

# PRIVILEGE AND PR

- Preservation of Privileged Communications should be considered as part of strategy
  - PR draft Communications can reveal highly sensitive and candid assessments of legal risks
  - PR executives are not employees and thus preservation of privilege is more difficult
  - Consider engaging through legal counsel
- Work product for legal work v. managing the effects of legal risks or other business functions
- Who communicates and how are communications managed?

# PUBLIC RECORDS

- Establish processes for managing public records requests
- Make your life easiest:
  - Keep a log for requests
  - Get clarity from requesters
  - Charge fees
  - Coordinate responses for similar requests
  - Publish records responses on the Department website
- Waivers of 19.356 rights of employees and local officeholders