SOCIALIZING YOUR CEO IV: THE ENGAGEMENT FACTOR
At Weber Shandwick, we believe that the Internet and social media are necessary tools for executives to effectively engage stakeholders and that CEO social engagement is a must in today’s digital world. Research that we have conducted on CEO reputation, *The CEO Reputation Premium: Gaining Advantage in the Engagement Era*, demonstrates that CEO sociability comes with reputation benefits: highly regarded global CEOs have a higher social media participation rate than the average CEO and are about three times as likely as CEOs with weak reputations to participate in social media.1 According to a report from G&S Communications and Harris Poll, half of Americans (54%) say senior leaders who are transparent on social media are most trustworthy.2

Online engagement allows CEOs to share their messages more broadly among stakeholders who spend a great deal of time online. According to a poll from GlobalWebIndex, Internet users spend an average of 1 hour and 58 minutes on social networks each day.3 When it comes to Facebook, users spend 50 minutes a day on its platforms (i.e., Facebook, Messenger, Instagram).4 CEO messages shared through social media have the potential to reach massive audiences. According to their respective websites, Facebook has 1.1 billion daily users, Twitter has 313 million monthly active users and LinkedIn has 106 million unique monthly active users. A report on social CEOs from Domo and CEO.com found that the average Fortune 500 CEO on Twitter has about 113,000 followers, and 13 CEOs from the Fortune 500 who are LinkedIn Influencers have over 100,000 followers.5 CEOs can also reach more than just their followers with the ability for followers to share, like and repost CEO content. There are many people connected to CEOs online and they spend a lot of time on the Internet. The opportunity for CEOs to join the online conversation is huge and they would be wise to consider jumping in and participating.

Because of the benefits and opportunity social media provides, Weber Shandwick takes a strong interest in measuring CEO engagement. We first embarked on our *Socializing Your CEO* research in 2010 when we launched one of the earliest quantitative explorations of CEO online and social media engagement. At the time, few chief executives globally were engaging online, but they have come a long way since. Our 2014 research, *Socializing Your CEO III: From Marginal to Mainstream*, found that the online sociability of top CEOs hit a record high. CEOs from the Fortune Global 50 rankings were employing online tools and utilizing their company websites and social networks more than ever before.6

2 Social Media & The CEO, G&S Communications and Harris Poll. | 3 GWI Social, Q3 2016, GlobalWebIndex.  
Given our conclusion in 2014 that CEO sociability had gone mainstream, we wanted to look at CEO online activities from a different angle for our new wave of research. Previously, we examined CEO online presence. In Socializing Your CEO IV: The Engagement Factor, we expand on our definition to also look at CEO engagement. Socializing Your CEO IV provides a Social CEO Index, which awards CEOs points based on their online presence and level of engagement, as well as 8 Tips for CEO Social Engagement.

WHAT WE DID

Weber Shandwick audited the online presence of CEOs from the top 50 public U.S. companies in the 2016 Fortune 500 rankings and CEOs from Fortune’s 25 Most Important Private Companies in the U.S. The latter list totals 29 CEOs because some companies have co-CEOs and multiple managing partners.

We also researched the top 50 CEOs from Mercury News’ top 150 companies in Silicon Valley for 2016. Given that these are the CEOs of leading technology companies, we hypothesized that these executives would be on the leading edge of social. The results for Silicon Valley CEOs can be found later in our report.

Our audit investigated three levels of CEO activity:

1. PRESENCE / VISIBILITY
   Are CEOs publicly visible online through their own sites or those of their companies?

2. POSTS
   Within the past year, are CEOs communicating on the sites on which they are visible?

3. ENGAGEMENT
   Do CEOs go beyond unilateral posting and interact online? That is, are they responsive and engaging?

The platforms we audited were the company website, company YouTube, external CEO blogs or websites, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Instagram. See our Methodology section at the end of this report for greater detail. The following report describes our five findings on CEO sociability and online engagement.
CEOs ARE VISIBLE, BUT NOT ENGAGING

We found that the majority of both public and private company CEOs has a presence on at least one of the online platforms we audited (92% and 76%, respectively). While both sets of CEOs excel in presence, the same is not true for anything deeper. Fewer than four in 10 public company CEOs and private company CEOs have posted on any of their platforms within the past 12 months (38% each) and are even less likely to have engaged online, i.e., interacted with others (22% vs. 34%, respectively). One thing, however, can be said for private company CEOs. When they post, they usually engage. Those CEOs deserve credit for their responsiveness.

We found that public and private company CEOs are present in different ways. Public company CEOs are more visible on their company websites than those at private companies (90% vs. 66%, respectively), while private company CEOs are more likely than public company CEOs to be found on social networks (59% vs. 50%, respectively) and to engage on social networks (34% vs. 22%, respectively). A lower level of social network usage by public company CEOs perhaps reflects a greater perception of risk, as website content creation can be more tightly managed. Clearly, public company CEOs have investors and regulators to worry about when it comes to disclosing material information.

We looked to see whether age may have played a role in public company CEOs’ higher engagement levels, hypothesizing that younger CEOs may be more comfortable interacting on social media, but found that the average age of public and private company CEOs only differs by three years.
Our definition of “social” extends beyond social networks. Throughout our years of studying social media and CEO engagement globally, we have found that social media usage and confidence vary across the world, sectors and organizational cultures, and we have learned that it behooves us to include the company website in our audit. Corporate websites are often home for CEO perspectives and company branded content and a platform we still believe is important to monitor for CEO engagement.

Both public and private company CEOs are likely to have a presence on the company website (90% and 66%, respectively). The company website provides an indisputable opportunity for companies to enhance the visibility of their senior leaders. According to GlobalWebIndex, Internet users are more likely to use a search engine when looking for more information about a brand or product than social networks, mobile apps and video sites.

Company websites are typically one of the top results when searching a company’s name, so it is likely people will go to the website first when looking for information about a CEO. It is also the “real estate” executives see value in. According to our CEO Reputation Premium research, 68% of global executives think it’s important for CEOs to have a presence on the company website, ranking just below speaking at industry conferences and being accessible to the media. Featuring the CEO across company website pages increases the accessibility of his or her point of view for all of a company’s stakeholders, especially since not every one of a company’s stakeholders are social media savvy.

To determine whether CEOs engage on the company website, we looked for messages, pictures and video on the website homepage, as well as on the “About Us,” careers, diversity/inclusion, and sustainability/CSR pages.
Public company CEOs make good use of their company website terrain. Eight in 10 (80%) use website pages such as the homepage, About Us page and sustainability page. Nearly half (46%) appear in a video on the company website and 34% have a presence on the company careers page. Nearly half of private company CEOs appear on company website pages (48%) and in video (45%).

One-third of public company CEOs (34%) have a presence on the careers page of their company websites, a rate three times that of private company CEOs (10%). Types of CEO visibility found on the careers page include letters, quotes and appearance in video. Understandably, some companies may not want to overemphasize the importance of the CEO in this area of the website and instead highlight a variety of employees. However, it is a missed opportunity for CEOs to not be featured in the careers section as one way to attract talent. According to our CEO Reputation Premium research, 77% of global executives say a CEO’s reputation attracts new employees. When it comes to recruiting the next generation, CEO sociability matters even more. Millennial executives are 71% more likely than Boomer executives to say that the CEO’s reputation influenced his or her decision to accept their job.

On the rise? We found 8% of public company CEOs and 10% of private company CEOs with what we refer to as CEO spotlight pages. These one-stop shops for finding information about a CEO are enhanced versions of a standard website bio and are sometimes even separate pages from the bio. They include links to the CEO’s social networks, photos and videos of him or her, collections of mentions in the media and links to speeches. Information is centralized and content is accessible and easy to find. As external engagement of CEOs continues to be in greater demand, we may see more of these CEO pages in the future.
SOCIAL NETWORKS NOT LEVERAGED ENOUGH BY CEOs

We found that private company CEOs are more likely than their public company counterparts to be present on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (59% vs. 50%, respectively). Private company CEOs are also found on more networks. On average, they are on 2.1 platforms while public company CEOs are on 1.3.

However, CEOs, regardless of segment, aren’t leveraging their social network presence. Of those who were found to have a profile, only a portion are posting and engaging. Public company CEOs have a higher drop-off between visibility and engagement. Half of them have a social network presence, but only 22% engage.

ENGAGEMENT IS NOW THE PINNACLE OF CEO SOCIABILITY. REPUTATIONS ARE ENHANCED WHEN CEOs ENGAGE SOCIALLY.

Leslie Gaines-Ross
Chief Reputation Strategist, Weber Shandwick
Of those CEOs who do post or engage, what does this kind of activity look like? Here are some insights based on our audit of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter:

**FACEBOOK**

We found a number of CEOs with Facebook Pages. According to Facebook, “Pages are for brands, businesses, organizations and public figures to create a presence on Facebook, whereas profiles represent individual people.” Pages give CEOs the potential to share their content with massive audiences. One CEO in our audit has over 230,000 followers, and depending how people interact with his or her posts, the CEO’s content could reach an audience even greater than that. We found CEOs posting a variety of content on their Pages, including news about their company, what their company is doing in the community and pictures of themselves with employees. Many of them also post video, including live interactive video, which is a new feature on the Facebook platform. One CEO in our audit frequently engages people who comment on his posts, including his own employees. This CEO recently engaged with a user who criticized customer service at the company and offered his email address to follow up on the issue.

**LINKEDIN**

CEOs who engage on LinkedIn are Influencers or authors. LinkedIn Influencers develop content to create professional and thoughtful conversations. While the Influencer program is invitation-only, any LinkedIn member can share insights by authoring their own posts. CEO Influencers and authors in our audit post on a variety of topics including industry trends, employees, career development, politics and social issues. One CEO engaged another LinkedIn member when the latter critiqued the CEO’s post. The CEO thanked him for his comment and defended his position.

**TWITTER**

The frequency of CEOs posting on Twitter varies, with a majority of them posting several times a month. Topics of Tweets also include social issues and activism, current events and even personal life anecdotes. CEOs engage with others less than they post their own content, but we did find many instances of CEOs engaging. One CEO responded to a new employee’s Tweet welcoming her to the company. Another CEO posted about making honey (a non-business post) and responded to someone who asked about his process.

Back when we first began our Socializing Your CEO research in 2010, social media was still in its earliest stages, and it was significant for CEOs to simply have a presence to be transparent and embrace new technology. Fast forward to 2016, being visible is no longer enough. In today’s digital world, posting and engaging on social networks allows CEOs to become part of the conversation, show that they care about connecting with stakeholders, demonstrate their leadership and expertise through the distribution of content, and even keep up with their socially engaged peers. Engagement is now the pinnacle of CEO sociability.
Video is a powerful and cost-effective tool for enhancing the visibility of CEOs. It is engaging, shows human emotion and turns the CEO into a visual storyteller. Companies can use already-existing video from events like keynote addresses, interviews and press conferences to share on their websites, YouTube channels and social networks. Video is also important because it’s a medium that people are consuming in high numbers. For example, 500 million people watch video on Facebook every day. YouTube has over a billion users who watch hundreds of millions of hours of video on YouTube daily. Social networks also allow users to share live video that they can interact with in real time. For executives wanting to reach more stakeholders, video is essential.

We found that 40% of public company CEOs and 31% of private company CEOs are making use of YouTube. When combined with what we found when auditing the company website, half of CEOs (58% public and 52% private) appear in corporate video.

Types of CEO videos found on the company YouTube channel vary. We found examples such as repurposed clips of keynote addresses and TV interviews, videos of one-on-one interviews and ones where the CEO speaks to viewers by looking directly at the camera, making a direct connection between the CEO and the audience. Videos also cover a variety of topics, including customers, updates on company progress, market predictions, industry outlook and company acquisitions.

---

7 Business Influencers Guide, Facebook
8 YouTube Statistics.
5 CEO WEBSITES
FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

We found one public company CEO and one private company CEO with their own websites (i.e., a separate entity from the corporate website), which is a platform we included in our audit for the first time this year. The websites we found share news and information about the CEO, list interviews and feature CEO posts. No public or private CEOs were found to have their own blogs, which is consistent with findings from earlier Socializing Your CEO audits. CEO long-form journalism has not truly evolved.

“IN TODAY’S DIGITAL WORLD, CEOs HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE MORE THAN CORPORATE FIGUREHEADS. MAKING SOCIAL CONTENT AND ENGAGEMENT A CORE COMPONENT OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS TRANSFORMS THE CEO INTO A CORPORATE STORYTELLER. CHIEF EXECUTIVES TODAY HAVE GREATER MEANS TO BE THE VOICE OF THEIR COMPANY AND CONNECT WITH THE AUDIENCES THAT ARE CLAMORING FOR THEIR CONTENT. ENGAGING ONLINE ALLOWS CEOs TO SHAPE THEIR OWN DIGITAL BRAND.”

Chris Perry
Chief Digital Officer, Weber Shandwick
A LOOK AT SILICON VALLEY

In addition to examining the online activities of public and private CEOs, we conducted a supplemental audit of CEOs from the top 50 companies in Silicon Valley with the hypothesis that they would be the standard bearers of sociability given their standing in the technology world. The list includes 51 CEOs due to one set of co-CEOs.

While Silicon Valley CEOs are slightly less visible than public company CEOs overall, they’re more likely to post and more likely to engage.

OVERALL ONLINE SOCIABILITY OF CEOs

Silicon Valley CEOs are more likely than public and private CEOs to be on social networks (71% vs. 50% and 59%, respectively), but are less likely than public company CEOs to have a presence on their company website (65% vs. 90%, respectively). Silicon Valley CEOs slightly lead public and private company CEOs with use of the company YouTube channel (47% vs. 40% and 31%, respectively). Our research revealed two Silicon Valley CEOs with their own blogs, which is something public and private company CEOs do not have.

We believe that Silicon Valley CEOs are more engaged than the public and private company CEOs because they have a less risk-avoidance nature.
We used the results of our audit to create a Social CEO Index. Here, we awarded CEOs one point for each platform they simply have a presence on, two points for each platform they’ve posted on within the past 12 months and three points for engaging or interacting with others. The maximum number of points a CEO could receive based on the number of platforms we audited is 38.

As mentioned earlier in the report, public company CEOs are more visible than those at private and Silicon Valley companies. However, because private and Silicon Valley company CEOs are more engaged than public company CEOs, they score higher on the Index (4.8 and 5.1 points vs. 3.7 points, respectively). Engagement is key to moving a CEO up the Index.

Weber Shandwick believes that engagement online with stakeholders is critical to building CEO credibility and reputation. For that reason, we began this Index, which we intend to track over time. At this early stage, we see that posting and engagement is driving CEO sociability.
We were also interested in seeing where CEOs share their points of view through contributed content, if at all. To do this, we searched to see whether the CEOs from all three of our audits wrote an article or op-ed within the past year. The outlets whose websites we searched, as recommended by media experts at Weber Shandwick, include:

Our audit found that very few of these CEOs contribute content to the media. This is a missed opportunity for executives to share their expertise through a medium that is consumed by a vast audience. In fact, we did not find any op-eds or articles from within the past year in five of the 10 outlets. The most popular source of CEO op-eds was The Wall Street Journal (14% of private company CEOs and 2% of public company CEOs).

Private company CEOs wrote the most op-eds, with two writing more than one. Some of the op-eds that surfaced related to the CEO’s business directly, such as a discussion on the state of the healthcare industry, transportation innovation and relationships with investors. Other CEOs wrote about topics not directly related to the company’s line of work, including freedom of speech, gender diversity and the American presidential election.

THE MOST POPULAR SOURCE OF CEO OP-EDS WAS THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

14% PRIVATE COMPANY CEOs | 2% PUBLIC COMPANY CEOs
The majority of CEOs, both public and private, are present and accounted for online. They engage through their company websites, video and social networks. Our research found that public and private company CEOs socialize in different ways with public company CEOs taking greater advantage of their company websites and private company CEOs making greater use of social networks, which are more interactive. But regardless of company ownership, it is important for CEOs to take advantage of digital tools and share their narratives online. As mentioned earlier, our CEO Reputation Premium research found highly regarded global CEOs have a higher social media participation rate than the average CEO. Those chief executives who are social reap the reputation benefits that come with sociability and are poised to directly reach stakeholders all around the world. Engagement online is the next wave of CEO credibility-building.

Socializing Your CEO IV shows that there is a lot of room for social improvement. Weber Shandwick recommends that companies consider the following strategies to become more effective chief storytellers and strengthen their company reputations. Doing so can also help build credibility, attract talent, assure stakeholders and humanize the brand. Perhaps it is asking a lot, but with business reputation at an all-time low (only 18% of Americans have a great deal/quite a lot of hope in big business, the lowest rate since 20099), greater engagement may be the antidote.

8 TIPS FOR CEO SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

9 “Big Business,” Gallup.
1

**WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, GET ONLINE**

8% of public company CEOs, 24% of private company CEOs and 14% of Silicon Valley CEOs are not even visible on any of the platforms we audited. With the majority of their peers engaging online, these CEOs should consider joining the social movement to stay competitive. Social media use has reputational benefits and CEOs have the opportunity to directly share their messages with massive audiences online. For those CEOs who have yet to get on board, they may want to consider starting off by making themselves present on their company website to have greater control over their narrative.

2

**OWN REAL ESTATE ON THE COMPANY CAREERS PAGE**

We found a sizable number of CEOs who are visible on the company careers page. With many global executives saying their CEO’s reputation influenced their decision to accept their job, highlighting the CEO on the part of the website where job seekers go to look for more information may help companies to attain talent. This is especially important for private company CEOs who currently trail their public peers in careers page utilization. The talent wars are only going to heat up and promoting culture from the top could make a difference.

3

**AGGREGATE CEO COMMUNICATIONS**

Consider putting CEO communications in one centralized place on the company website. CEOs should make these pages more dynamic with recent and relevant content. We found a number of CEOs with their own spotlight pages, which featured things like recent videos, photos and speeches. These pages can also use social media plug-ins to show a CEO’s most recent posts from their social profiles. Putting this kind of information in one place makes it easy to find and share with just one link. With attention spans so low, easy access is desirable.

4

**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VIDEO**

Video provides many advantages to CEOs. It’s humanizing, conveys emotion and allows executives to speak directly to their audiences. Video is also easily shared, reused and repurposed. For example, we found many examples of CEO video that came from TV interviews. It doesn’t need to be created from scratch and can be shared on both the company website and company YouTube channel. Video consumption among Internet users is huge and is only going to grow as visual communications become increasingly relevant.
Some CEOs are taking their sociability up a notch. Many CEOs on LinkedIn, for example, use it for more than a resume. They author articles for others to read. Additionally, companies are increasingly becoming publishers of their own content. Embrace this trend and regularly feature the CEO in writing or video. Doing so establishes the CEO as a thought leader and reflects his or her industry expertise. Putting CEOs at the heart of content is a great opportunity for CEOs to share insight into business discussions. CEOs should also consider writing op-eds for external media sources to share their points of view in leading news publications that can be then repurposed socially.

Engage or be disengaged. We found that a healthy number of CEOs have social network profiles, but most are not posting or engaging. CEOs should consider posting content to their profiles. These posts don’t have to be frequent; even sharing information just once a quarter would help to amplify the CEO’s voice and facilitate online conversation. If someone responds to a post, consider writing a line or two back to engage stakeholders. Make it an imperative.

CEOs choosing to go social should develop their own “voice.” When connecting with the general public online, lose the corporate jargon and communicate in a first-person, familiar and relatable way. Consider using social media to communicate personal anecdotes in addition to business news and information to humanize the CEO and contribute to a unique point of view.

CEO sociability is not without risk. According to Weber Shandwick research on social CEOs, 56% of global executives think it is very or somewhat risky for CEOs to participate in social media. With the existence of critics and Internet “trolls” (people who deliberately post argumentative or proactive content), along with the potential of CEOs not sounding authentic, there is always room for CEOs’ online activities to be criticized. In today’s highly charged political environment, there is even risk with CEOs not engaging on social media to make their voices heard. Silence may be interpreted as support of a certain side of a public issue. CEOs should understand the platform they choose before posting content and have plans in place to address any negative response or engagement. Develop a thick skin and use any criticism as a learning opportunity.

## METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDITED SITE OR PLATFORM</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR PRESENCE/VISIBILITY</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR POSTING</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR ENGAGING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMPANY WEBSITE</td>
<td>CEO posts messages (e.g., letters, quotes), pictures, or video on the homepage, “About Us” page, careers page, diversity/inclusion and sustainability/corporate social responsibility pages, or, CEO has leadership or activity/events page.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOUTUBE</td>
<td>CEO appears in a video uploaded by company on the firm’s corporate YouTube channel from within the past year.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWITTER</td>
<td>Profile is officially verified by Twitter. If profile is not officially verified, account must be linked to from company Twitter or it must have the CEO’s picture and at least one Tweet from after the CEO assumed office. Tweets and accounts followed must realistically be those of the CEO.</td>
<td>Tweeted at someone else or retweeted someone within the past 12 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK</td>
<td>Profile or Page is officially verified by Facebook. If not officially verified, the account must include CEO’s picture and accurate biographical information. Posts must realistically be those of the CEO.</td>
<td>Have posted within the past 12 months. Post must be visible on CEO’s own profile or feed. In case of CEO blog/website, post must be dated from past 12 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOOGLE+</td>
<td>Profile is officially verified by Google+. If profile is not officially verified, account must have CEO’s picture and title. Posts and accounts followed must realistically be those of the CEO.</td>
<td>CEO engaged on something they’ve posted within past 12 months (e.g., responded to a comment). We were limited in the kinds of activity we had access to on these platforms and could not determine if CEOs were engaging on the profile of another user. CEOs on Twitter therefore have an advantage of being counted as more engaging.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTAGRAM</td>
<td>Profile is officially verified by Instagram. If profile is not officially verified, account must have CEO’s name and photos must be realistically those of the CEO.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINKEDIN</td>
<td>Profile is publicly visible and contains accurate information and current position at the company, or is a designated LinkedIn Influencer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOG/CEO WEBSITE</td>
<td>CEO blog or website that is separate entity from company blog or website.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SOCIALIZING YOUR CEO IV: THE ENGAGEMENT FACTOR, PLEASE CONTACT:

CHRIS PERRY
CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER
WEBER SHANDWICK
cperry@webershandwick.com

VIVIAN SCHILLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR-IN-RESIDENCE
WEBER SHANDWICK
vschiller@webershandwick.com

CAROL BALLOCK
EVP, EXECUTIVE EQUITY & ENGAGEMENT LEAD
WEBER SHANDWICK
cballock@webershandwick.com

LESLEY GAINES-ROSS
CHIEF REPUTATION STRATEGIST
WEBER SHANDWICK
lgaines-ross@webershandwick.com