

# Corporate affairs – engaging with a dynamic universe

Report from the Corporate Affairs Academy 2017

# Introduction

The fourth report from our annual Corporate Affairs Academy (CAA) programme is infused with the implications of a post-Trump, post-Brexit world, where the spread of information is faster and more fragmented than ever. Previously dependable assumptions about attitudes to behaviour, beliefs and the means to influence them, whether for business advantage or “damage control”, are no longer reliable. Information travels in multiple directions simultaneously and the source and subject of the information cannot dictate where it goes or fully encompass its implications in advance.

This is a confusing, sometimes contradictory and always challenging universe, and mastering it is not an option. However, conceding that point is the first step for organisations in developing the capacity to thrive. There is no magic formula, but the understanding of key principles that can be applied in the way organisations are configured, enabled and informed is invaluable in creating the nimble, responsive mindset that these ever-changing circumstances require.

Corporate affairs (CA) – as an overarching function, interacting within organisations from top to bottom, and building on its traditional role of “lightning rod” to that universe outside the organisation – is ideally placed to be both the go-between for and the interpreter of this new universe, and to use the information gleaned to contribute in meaningful strategic ways. Indeed, it is beginning to play an increasingly overt role in leading organisations through the complexities of this new universe and helping them to make better strategic decisions.

From the CA leaders sharing their insights, expertise and personal experience at this year’s CAA, it is clear that senior leaders of organisations vary greatly in how far they appreciate both how complex the new universe is and how significant a contribution CA can make if the function is not pigeon-holed around risk, risk mitigation and communications tactics.

The CAA, run by the Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation in conjunction with Executive Education at Saïd Business School, and in partnership with Teneo Blue Rubicon, comprises two one-and-a-half-day sessions of presentations and discussion. These provide a forum for CA leaders to consider ways to develop both the effectiveness of the function and their own capabilities, with the help of leading practitioners in CA, the media, business and other organisations.

For more information, see: [www.sbs.oxford.edu/caa](http://www.sbs.oxford.edu/caa). The CAA reports for 2014, 2015 and 2016 are available to download at [www.sbs.oxford.edu/caareport](http://www.sbs.oxford.edu/caareport).

# Executive summary

The CAA comprises two sessions over three days hosted at Saïd Business School in Oxford in April and October. The first session identifies core concepts and current research; the second builds on this to identify practical strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the function, including reputation intelligence and reporting and high-value corporate affairs capabilities. This year, in addition, participants hosted break-out sessions in September at their own organisations, exploring topics that the cohort chose in the course of the first half of the programme. These topics were then also explored further within the second half of the programme. Participants chose three topics ranging from the thematic to the more overtly practical:

- character and capability, with a focus on advocacy;
- trust – with an eye to the disparity between different generations in the degree of trust they have in institutions;
- metrics – both for CA to measure the impact of its work, and for it to develop the contribution it makes to organisations more broadly.

The breakout sessions included a debate attended by an invited audience to explore how the mechanisms and understandings of trust are being changed across generations in a post-social media, post-influencer, digital news world. There is significant overlap in the three topics, of course, so we have used two headings to organise them thematically: "The dynamics of engagement" and "Empowering the CA function".

## The dynamics of engagement

### Character and capability

The assessments that others make of organisations and individuals are subject to multiple influences – what they are told and by whom, for example. How they apply their judgement to that information, and how they act on it, is very often informed by their assessment of different components of reputation. Character and capability are two valuable lenses through which to view the dynamics of reputation. The first reflects social and moral qualities; the second reflects how capable an organisation is deemed of fulfilling the tasks that it promises stakeholders it can perform. Understanding the relative weighting of both components within reputations opens the door to more effective strategic thinking, both proactive and reactive.

### Trust

Trust is created by the fulfilment of expectations: in this context, that the target organisation has promulgated or enabled to flourish. It also involves an acceptance of risk. It is the key relational mechanism at the heart of the licence to operate. Loss of trust results in the desertion of customers, loss of value, share price falls, higher costs, loss of efficiency, and regulatory intervention. Building successful relationships based on trust also has benefits far beyond simply positive reputations: trust in a relationship creates potential advocates who can foster wider engagement, create value and make organisations more resilient against negative events.

## Empowering the CA function

### Professional development

Given how fundamental trust and reputation concerns have become to the licence to operate, CA has a considerable opportunity to play a more central role in organisations. For that to become a widespread reality, the function must professionalise beyond its traditional comms responsibilities. It must develop the skills, understanding, and tools to make a meaningful and informed contribution to strategic conversations at an early stage, and not simply to communicate strategy and deal with the reputational outcomes. This has implications for training, recruitment and CA's relationship and partnership with other functions.

### Metrics

The business information world runs on data, whether it be rankings, surveys or more mysterious "black box" tools. More than ever, CA is expected to use data and metrics: both to build the case for the contribution it can make within an organisation, providing insight to help leaders make better business decisions; and to measure its own performance. Which metrics answer the challenging questions set by this new universe? Some tools can be expensive, cumbersome, and their results by no means clear cut or persuasive. Aggregating and interpreting the information gleaned can be a costly and time-consuming business. Handled badly, the process can make the user a hostage to data; but used judiciously, the right metrics can inform a narrative that puts CA at the heart of an organisation's key conversations and initiatives.

# 1. The dynamics of engagement

As outlined above, reputations have both a character and capability component. The character component has grown in importance as organisations seek deeper engagement with stakeholders. Changing character reputations requires a combination of behaviour change, an authentic narrative of “what and why”, and an understanding of the networks where the story must be told. CA has traditionally been the function to “own” narratives and networks. If it can contribute to behaviour change, and build a culture that can adapt to continuous change, it can make a holistic contribution that is exponentially more powerful.

- 1.1 Where once organisations sought a positive reputation for their capability, the character reputation is becoming increasingly prominent – more so as they look to turn their stakeholders from “positively inclined” into advocates.

**[The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer] found that 75 per cent of people expect businesses to be taking specific actions to improve social and economic factors affecting the community... expecting more from businesses than ‘do what you do well’.”**

- 1.2 Character priorities and cultural change have to be driven from the top of organisations, from the leadership and the board. The aims are clear to many (not all) leaders; the implications less so. CA is the function in the best position to articulate these shifts.

**“There’s now a much bigger question of, ‘How do we go about our business. Is it acceptable?’, but people are very hazy at the senior leadership level about what that actually means.”**

- 1.3 Commitment from top leadership is also vital for organisations to earn a key benefit of character transformation: improved engagement with, and advocacy from, the governmental/regulatory stakeholders.

**“It absolutely helped with all the external advocacy side, because it meant that we were in the room with very senior government people from across the world and you had relations and conversations with people that could be very helpful both as ‘sword and shield’.”**

- 1.4 Character reputation assessments are volatile, capability ones are “sticky” and less prone to revision. Assessing them separately, and understanding how they relate to one another, is helpful both in contributing to the success of a business and the strategic plan, and in bolstering resilience against negative hits.

**“Character will help get you out of a capability problem. Capability will not get you out of a character problem.”**

**“The VW emissions scandal is a good example, illustrating where the company’s character was suddenly at issue, not its capability.”**

- 1.5 When defining the character components of an organisation’s identity, the more distinct (even singular) the statement of purpose, the more seamlessly it can be incorporated into operations, purpose and messaging.

**“We made the decision that we’re going to talk about one thing, and everything we talk about is going to be through the lens of sustainable living. We had good evidence that for millennials as well as mid-career people, that was what really floated their boat.”**

**“It’s interesting when you said you were talking about [concentrating on] just one thing [sustainability], because it’s all-encompassing. And I struggled with trying to get my organisation to understand this concept.”**

**“If you’re going to try and be genuinely a leader, I think that singular focus might be really important.”**

- 1.6 The business performance comes first, even in a transformation, but cannot work at the expense of employees. CA is there to help strike the right balance.

**“The business goals are always there and they come first.”**

**“If you just go after the profit, you destroy the social side - the relationship you have with your employees.”**

- 1.7 Investor attitudes to character-based initiatives are a mixed picture, in this CAA cohort's experience: culture and character are on the investor radar, but are often tied to business aims and not behaviour; to risk profiles and agility rather than societal expectations and driving engagement. It is CA's job to put the business benefits of the latter concerns on the agenda.

**"Our investors only got excited about sustainability as a box-ticking exercise... once we sold, it went away. You need the metrics, the business case and the budget, but investors won't invest [in sustainability] until they need to."**

**"Reputation [for investors] was just a hygiene factor."**

There are some more encouraging exceptions, however.

**"We had four investor meetings... all of them were most interested in how we're going to change the cultural direction of the company. It wouldn't have happened five years ago. But they all wanted to talk about cultural change and character."**

- 1.8 Consistency is key to establishing your organisational identity, and CA has a great contribution to make here: the narratives need to reflect the reality as all stakeholders experience it, internally and externally, even when inconsistency might provide short-term gain.

**"If that's who you are, then no matter who you're talking to that's who you are; you can have different aspects of a conversation, but that's who you are."**

- 1.9 The generation of trust is increasingly being prioritised as a core component of strategic advantage, but the definition of trust is often contested/confused, leading to muddle and a lack of alignment.

**"Trying to get a common language and common understanding of [trust] is really hard - and then to keep it that way, rather than it moving off based on somebody else, some management consultancy or whatever."**

**"Different parts of the business over time have tried to get involved - Legal, Risk [etc.] - but it often skews what you're actually talking about."**

**"In [company X] we have a 'trust team' and what they do is customer facing - when I think about trust I think about it in a more human way, and when I think of reputation I think about it more at a business level."**

- 1.10 Advocacy is increasingly the benchmark of successful engagement, rather than a more binary positive/negative assessment. CA is ideally placed to build advocacy and to monitor its spread.

**"How do you go from an OK reputation to actual advocacy? Do you do the same things, but just more of them? Or do you have to do different things?"**

- 1.11 Two prominent complementary phenomena, personal interaction and rating mechanisms, make the engagement challenge simultaneously broad and exacting. CA has a role addressing both.

**"I think [X] is an entirely reputational platform. People who buy look at the ratings in order to inform what they buy or don't buy, and the interesting thing about it is that we trust strangers more than we trust institutions."**

- 1.12 Some organisations struggle to work out how to remake culture, when their approach is focused on meeting statutory requirements. This formulaic approach is weak and limited.

**"[in banking] much is driven by the regulator. [The bank is] trying to codify [behaviours] and put it into boxes."**

- 1.13 Cultural/character change cannot occur without authentic behaviour change – a process where CA should be an effective instigator and guide.

**"We have a role in ensuring that while this corporate character is being developed and built into every decision and action in the business, there is a behavioural, cultural values piece to ensure that people are acting and supporting it, or not undermining it."**

**"Companies that aspire to rapid [reputational] change and don't back that up with authentic underlying behaviour change fall very flat on their face."**

1.14 CA's "soft power", its understanding of the emotional component (the function's EQ), is a vital strength in driving change and fostering understanding.

**"There's a little book I wrote with the brand attributes, an emotive story about what we are as a company, and it was a big play to get all our MDs to care."**

1.15 Activating your employee base is a key driver for cultural/character change. The employees' own networks are powerful tools in the embedding of behaviour and the spreading of constructive narratives; and prioritising character initiatives attracts talent.

**"One of the key questions was asking employees, 'Have you spoken to friends and family about [our] sustainability plans?' And about 40 per cent hadn't, which is not that surprising in hindsight, but you know there's a massive opportunity there."**

**"We had very senior people taking significant pay cuts to come [to the company]."**

**"People were saying, this is why I come to work, you've suddenly given me a purpose."**

1.16 There is potential conflict with other functions in the organisation when trying to focus on internal behavioural change, when they think in terms of external perceptions formed by brand, for example.

**"The classic old school marketers... didn't get that people think of companies as groups of individuals who will have a culture. Uber or Starbucks are different sorts of companies to John Lewis, and it's because of the people."**

1.17 CA must be equipped to develop and communicate new ways to measure success beyond the usual financial or performance metrics.

**"There were stories that involved very hard-bitten supply chain people going in saying, 'No, I don't get this stuff,' who came out three days later going, 'I believe it. I get it. What can we do?'"**

1.18 Character-based initiatives are not fluffy abstractions: they can be cited directly for helping deliver business goals and they have measurable returns in terms of recruitment, retention and individuals' performance within the business, as well as contributing positively to external reputations.

**"All the big retailers have their own sustainability targets. They can only meet them through the supply chain. We're their supply chain... So who would you work in partnership with: X, Y or us, if we can help tick all those boxes?"**

**"The money you save on less water, less input and less plastic, all the rest of it, is extraordinary [with sustainability goals]."**

**"This [character-based initiative] is something which we can apply to very specific outcomes, because it drives product development, it drives a supply chain, your factories..."**

1.19 Connecting purpose and character to core operations is a work in progress for many organisations. The danger is that top-down aspirations do not trickle through. CA is the function that can help connect aspiration and idealism with everyday realities.

**"We've got a chief exec who's very committed to sustainability; we've got a sustainability team who are quite 'wonkish'. What we struggle with is trying to get them to come out of the sky and focus on what the outcomes are on the ground."**

**"[If you] struggle to translate it into actions on the ground... you lose the senior people and the commercial people who you need to make this sort of thing happen."**

1.20 Character transformations require wholehearted reorganisation. Teams that have for years been taking care of CSR-type issues may need to be fundamentally repurposed to apply similar initiatives in a more fundamental way.

**"For many years our sustainability team was only focused on doing international PR: telling the story but not doing very much. Also they were not engaging internally - they were just at the corporate level. Now our sustainability team is getting much closer to operations, getting KPIs to the business."**

## 2. Empowering the CA function

CA needs to ensure it has developed the capabilities and understanding to truly become a strategic partner in businesses and organisations. It needs better talent management and training, employees with a wider experience of the organisation, a well-informed world view and digital expertise.

- 2.1 There has been a fundamental shift in expectations around the CA function. CA needs to be staffed by people with a sophisticated understanding of opportunity and risk, and an ability to work with the digital tools and data to underpin its insights. It must earn the right to be taken seriously by the leadership of organisations.

*"We need genuine all-rounders who can work across the piece, who can do digital, recognising that we are working with the last of the leaders who don't do digital."*

*"One important skill is horizon scanning ... [CA people] have to have a strategic mindset, an interest in geopolitics. You also need somebody who understands campaigning... we get a lot of NGO attention."*

*"There was a lot of professionalising...We needed to prove ourselves with a new CEO."*

*"Our role, that was relationship-based, is becoming more strategic."*

- 2.2 The best CA practice combines finely tuned messaging (content generation for internal and external audiences) and analysis measurement (surveys and digital tools) to create metrics around clearly defined business goals.

*"The ideal metrics are a mixture. I have a mix of real time and periodic ways of measuring what we're doing and the effectiveness of what we're doing... we have an integrated dashboard so we can see at any one time what is happening on a particular channel."*

*"We're creating a lot of content. My team runs the channel mix as well, internal and external. I can say: that piece of video or that image had a time investment or a financial investment, and this is the return that we got as a result."*

*"We do a lot of content partnerships now as well, at specific times to target specific audiences."*

- 2.3 CA can find the expertise it needs by partnering with other functions in the business, by recruiting from other areas of the business, and by sourcing the kind of training that other areas of the business use.

*"This was a whole new world... something that the marketers were starting to get involved with. A couple of years later... [my team are] as good as the marketing teams, and their own capability in digital is right up there with anybody."*

*"In marketing you are trained in a particular way, and that's how we have approached this manifesto of the brand."*

*"I sent [CA team] on digital marketing courses for a day. Econsultancy in particular does 50-odd different ones for a half-day or a full day."*

- 2.4 There is a growing "toolbox" of feedback and sentiment measurement mechanisms available to CA. Used in the right way, these can give the function the legitimacy to contribute to strategic conversations.

*"The business has four strategic objectives around: being a responsible business; actively managing our assets; high-performance culture; our customer experience. So we structured an integrated dashboard to get the metrics on all of those different streams in one place."*

*"We put customer experience on the agenda with the CEO and put in place metrics that showed where customers weren't having great experiences. This led to a major change that we are facilitating around the business model."*

- 2.5 The data that is generated must be tied to business aims. From a mixture of stakeholder surveys and digital tools, CA must extract the relevant narratives for the business.

*"Correlating and cross-referencing the digital tools – how the conversation is performing – with the stakeholder survey... made us a sharper function, more professional and [enabled] a more strategic conversation about value."*

- 2.6 CA leaders are increasingly being expected to track stakeholder expectations of their organisations – and fulfilment of those – as a metric of performance.

**“[If reputation is] the extent to which you are perceived to have met stakeholders’ expectations, what are those expectations? How do we track them, how do we analyse them, how do you know when you are meeting them, and how do you track that?”**

**“We’ve made our general managers be remunerated around some of these indicators, such as our product in society.”**

**“We do KPIs especially around the customer experience and satisfaction. We haven’t yet been able to push that through in to personal objectives and personal KPIs, but it’s a starting point.”**

- 2.7 There is a recognition that senior executives are taking reputation into account in developing strategy, but too often the emphasis or tendency is towards the downside and on risk. Identifying the upside, where reputation can create value for the business, is less frequently done.

**“Rather than just protecting [the organisation] when we’re vulnerable, when it comes to crises, it’s about linking into the upside of the business.”**

**“Sometimes you have to persuade leaders that it isn’t just about handling [an issue] in the moment. It is about the well of goodwill you build up. Intellectually you have to get them to that place... then you will have their attention and they will allow budget for it.”**

- 2.8 Systematic strategic thinking from CA, underpinned by rigorous data, can set the agenda for the entire organisation in a way that is transformative.

**“What we identified with quite a lot of research was that we could build a ‘stakeholder brand’. We identified what the value was at stake, market by market, stakeholder group by stakeholder group, and tried to work out where we wanted to get to with [each]. Could we increase value... and what would that look like?”**

- 2.9 Plans that benefit the character reputation and subsequently capability can produce metrics that relate directly to performance through, for example, efficiency savings (see 1.18).

**“The annual updates of the [X] plan, were partly to demonstrate that we are on track to meet these unbelievable commitments, but also along the way to show how it’s benefiting the business. Having metrics relates it to a business case.”**

- 2.10 The character reputation of a company can become a significant – and measurable – part of the consumer proposition. By driving deeper engagement with consumers, CA can make a strong contribution here.

**“We know that between 12 and 15 per cent of consumers really mind about the company behind the brand they’re buying.”**

**“I’m told to ‘own’ the voice of the customer.”**

- 2.11 The case still has to be made for CA’s contribution to the core business aims, given its “soft” comms origins. The narrative to potential allies (and obstructors) has to be focused on their functional needs.

**“You have to win them over, but I think what we’ve tried to do is use a regular rhythm of data sharing to illustrate both performance and to give them a pat on the back to say, ‘All the work you’ve done... has shifted the dial – thank you.’”**

- 2.12 Well organised reputation-related metrics give a clear line on CA work to present to the ExCo and the board at a time when the battle for attention and justifying budget is hotter than ever.

**“It obviously helps structure the conversation with business leaders. It takes that to a different level. It gives it rigour.”**

**“We’re going to have a conversation with the board in December, around reputation – [which becomes] a much more structured way of directing and integrating our metrics.”**

**“We’ve used it as a route in to the ExCo and the board to ensure they are having a conversation about reputation... this will be used as the starting point... from that it will be what’s the strategy and how are we going to shift the dial against these strategic objectives?”**

- 2.13 Making common cause with other functions is a useful way to embed CA's work through the organisation, to spread complimentary learning, and even to increase available budget.

**"We worked in partnership with [the brands] because they loved the exposure, and the brands' marketing budget paid for it."**

**"When I first did the [new strategic focus work], the brands didn't want to know. Now, two-and-a-half years later, it's their idea."**

**"HR tends to be very textbook about how you can change a culture... I think [CA] can put a real-world lens on it. It is led by HR but we are doing a lot of the heavy lifting, so it's not just something you put on a page to tell the regulator."**

**"There is a rigour that customer experience people apply on the customer journey that we can use... having a clear narrative around how you are adding value."**

- 2.14 Effective use of data drives more respect for the function, and the licence to pursue more of the same.

**"[CA metrics] are a tool for our corporate affairs director to say: 'This data is an argument for budget, is an argument for resource, and it will make a difference for [the organisation].'"**

**"We've been lucky at [X] and been able to invest in this. Once you've got used to spending some money on it, I've found it delivers more investment."**

- 2.15 Benchmarking against competitors is not the best way to use what your metrics reveal. Prioritise adding value and building a narrative that emphasises the contribution of your monitoring work.

**"One of the most important things is to think about the value at stake, rather than where you rank versus your peers."**

- 2.16 While trust is much debated as a concept, the data is essential to identify what matters in engaging stakeholders, to foster the opportunity for trust and then advocacy.

**"[We now know] where the real issue is – that's what the data and insight is showing. There's an opportunity to exponentially increase trust in the company."**

- 2.17 Well thought-out and investigated data in this space has a proven track record in preventing wasteful strategic missteps.

**"We were able to say straight away, 'Forget that strategy, this is what the strategy needs to be,' and that's what we now do in the UK."**

- 2.18 Access to data can be an issue. In the worst cases, departments guard their data, perceiving sharing it as a threat. In the best, the data is hosted on open platforms where they can contribute to everyone's efforts.

**"They keep [their data] really close... it's a real struggle."**

**"All our data around business performance, market analytics or customer sentiment is self-serve. It's brilliant not just for understanding but also for campaigns. I can look at what people are searching for every day."**

- 2.19 Off-the-peg tools for reputational measurement should be treated with caution. Identifying and developing appropriate tools is a challenge and is part of a process: as each iteration reveals whether the data being harvested is the most relevant and actionable.

**"I get quite worried about the products that people offer in the market place... we've tried to look at what's important for us, what's the value for us."**

**"The basic, off-the-shelf, measurement techniques enable you to dip your toe into the water [but we are] getting more advanced. Every month we look at performance indicators across the company and reputation is now part of that... in the same way as sales tracking."**

**"We look at it in different dimensions in ways that we think can give us very actionable insights. I'm not a believer in your reputation out of 10 or all these other things that we all get bombarded with.... What will the team do differently tomorrow, that they wouldn't have done, had they not had this data?"**

- 2.20 Metrics must address business aims. For CA, this means turning metrics into persuasive narratives to produce insight, not just data.

**"As an engineering colleague says, 'It's very easy to measure failure with great accuracy... if you're not actually delivering something different which is going to make an impact, you're just measuring something for measurement's sake.'"**

**"Beware the curse of data... every other function is trying to move away from data into insight."**

- 2.21 There are always sceptics who will be predisposed to resist arguments for transformational change. When pushing such initiatives, identifying where the quickest "wins" that resonate with business goals might come from – and measuring them – can provide validation and momentum.

**"Q. Is the supply chain one of the smarter areas to highlight, to deliver some momentum with sceptics?**

**A. Yes – but different things will get different people; you have to attack a number of different fronts."**

- 2.22 The deficits in organisational thinking that CA has to address can have distinct variations by sector, as two personal testimonies from the CAA illustrate.

In the tech sector, it can be particularly challenging to move the debate around metrics beyond the operational micro-metrics, given how these companies are so driven by micro-data on business performance:

**"In my experience in technology businesses, the metrics that they're managing are not metrics around reputation – [they] are very short term, they're around clicks, they're around traffic, that's the absolute obsession."**

In property management, there is a tendency not to think in human terms about the nature of business relationships, and the societal implications of large property projects:

**"We are driving traditionally functional, surveyor types to think more broadly. I do joke when I'm doing media training that we have to 'turn on the empathy button'."**

- 2.23 While positive reputational and advocacy outcomes are a solid, measurable aspiration, unlike most performance metrics these are problematic to tie down to a timeline or a financial value, and goal setting in that way can be counter-productive.

**"It's not, 'In a year, we need to be in this place.' It's more, 'Let's really look at the amount of apathy, how we decrease that neutrality, or how we increase positive intent.'"**

- 2.24 Ensure that in partnering with other functions (such as in 2.3) that CA's contribution is adding distinctive value and not simply duplicating effort or diluting the purpose of the function.

**"You have to work out what space you're going to play in and that other people are not already playing in."**

**"A lot of the experiences that we were tracking were based on customer experience – we had the opportunity to ask more comms-specific questions, but [the business] might ask, 'Why is comms investing all this money into what we're kind of doing?'"**

- 2.25 CA has to get rid of wasteful operations, which are often a hangover from old ways of simply putting out information without sufficient planning.

**"The corporate affairs in my last place was a process-driven function... little delineation between strategic thought and operational delivery."**

**"I've got newsletters being produced but with no thought as to why. [Activity] has to be rooted in business success. If it's good for our customers, good for our company we do it. If not, it adds no value."**

- 2.26 Internal comms is an important area for CA to contribute, given the greater transparency of businesses; the importance of employees in driving advocacy and influencing reputations directly; and the fact that it is a "Cinderella" area that is often not sufficiently prioritised or resourced.

"Employee engagement is top of everyone's agenda... Ownership is not always clear. There are so many levels you can engage at [but] very few execs know what good looks like."

"[Internal comms] is the single most underexploited area."

"There is a perception among comms people that internal is the poor relation."

"There are fantastic digital tools. We are doing social sharing, [but] we invest a lot of money and people use it quite functionally."

- 2.27 While developing the capabilities outlined here, the CA function must preserve and prioritise its USP within the organisation: its "antennae" and instincts.

"We are not data monkeys. All of us here have better EQ judgement and gut feeling than many peers who have an analytical approach... sometimes you have to trust your gut and the gut of the CEO."

- 2.28 The development of robust data makes CA resilient to scrutiny of its own operations and role.

"What I've found through a quite painful McKinsey process was that it was really helpful having data and insight to hand to be able to justify your strategy and your resource levels."



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