

ELECTION READINESS

Protecting Reputation and Preparing Employees for Ongoing Uncertainty

The upcoming U.S. presidential election is arguably the most divisive of our lifetime. In a year marked by a pandemic, economic setback, racial injustice, political unrest, and now the president's COVID-19 diagnosis, communicators are challenged to navigate an ever-changing environment where they are faced with tough decisions on when—or if—to speak up internally and/or externally.

How do organizations develop strategies to navigate this election cycle, make good decisions in real time to ensure they are living their values and avoid allowing this divisive and politicized environment to overwhelm their brands, both internally and externally?

Based on our recent panel discussion by leaders from a range of Ketchum communication specialties, here are five actions you can take to protect your brand reputation and support employees.

Lead with authenticity. Your brand's reputation is not up for a vote. Go back to foundational pieces like values, purpose and mission. Reinforce your company's core belief systems and ensure your company's brands are extending and amplifying these internally and externally.

Credibility wins in incredible times. Revisit and reaffirm what retaining credibility looks like for your organization, its leaders and its people. Use this time to message train (or retrain) your leaders and experts. Strive to avoid spinning as it can quickly erode credibility, which is difficult to rebuild. Keep trust and transparency at the center of your communications strategies.

Adopt a war room mentality. In this environment, scenario planning isn't just for crisis communicators. Have a daily team meeting and gut-check about the tone of the day both internally and externally. In a tense political climate with a potentially contested election, ask yourselves: are the communications we had planned for the day still useful and the right tone and message for the moment? Be prepared to pivot where necessary.

Encourage civic engagement. Everyone is equal when we vote. Companies play a critical role in making it easier for Americans to cast their ballots. Take this opportunity to support your employees by providing flexibility no matter how they plan to exercise their election rights. Consider offering time off, flex time, or a meeting-free day on Nov. 3 or even encourage employees to participate in local voter registration and education.

Cultivate safe spaces. Embracing a diverse and inclusive workplace requires courageous conversations with your people. Now is the time to audit your organization's ability to create safe containers to meet your employees' needs. Allow your teams to talk through what they require from you, from others and for themselves. Make sure all feel included, involved and engaged in dialog — even if they cannot vote. Look for ways to keep conversations going pre-, during and post-election.

Electoral College Key Moments in Time

In the event of a contested result, these dates will be key in the decision-making of determining the next U.S. president. If the electoral college doesn't vote to award a candidate 270 electoral college votes, the current president and vice president's terms expire on January 20, and the presidency goes down the line of succession to the House Majority Leader.

Nov. 3:
Election Day

Dec. 14:
State electoral colleges formally vote

Jan. 6:
Electoral votes counted

Jan. 20:
Inauguration Day and date when term of current presidency expires

Additional Resources

- [Preparing Communicators for a Disrupted or Contested Election Result](#)
- [How the Election Cycle Will Impact the Tech Media Landscape](#)
- [Why Not to Spin Science: Five Tips for Communicators](#)
- [Election Readiness Webinar Recording \(Registration Required\)](#)

Relevant Ketchum Specialties

Employee Communications & Engagement

Employees are the essential engine that run your business — your top influencer, internally and externally. Through creative change management, tailored employee engagement, unique content strategies, robust content creation and visual storytelling, we help strengthen your most valuable asset and drive connections that build strong brand advocates both inside and outside the organization.

Ketchum understands organizations from an inside-out perspective. Our team works closely with some of the world's largest companies to help them transform, grow, and communicate with their workforce and solve their most pressing challenges.

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Executive Advisory & Media Services

From enunciating a business roadmap to living brand purpose, the communication expectations for C-suite executives has never been higher. With a series of dedicated services, Ketchum's Executive Advisory team helps leaders build an evidence-based narrative and coaches them on delivering their story successfully through a variety of channels.

Ketchum's media team provides counsel to clients on approaches and the media landscape, creates and executes tailored media strategies, forges deep relationships with reporters and secures impactful coverage with the goal of driving business results.

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Issues & Crisis

The Ketchum Issues and Crisis Network helps companies improve their preparation for and response to crisis situations, including tailored crisis training, scenario planning and testing, and crisis simulations. We help clients anticipate and manage gaps between operations and stakeholder expectations and perceptions. And when litigation arises, we manage the case in the court of public opinion.

Ketchum has some of the deepest experience in issues and crisis management among public relations agencies today. Our 100+ senior crisis and issues management counselors have a working knowledge of crisis strategy in their specific markets, as well as a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of media channels in today's global marketplace. We are one of the only full-service agencies with a full-time crisis team that is supported by a network of senior counselors on six continents.

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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

DE&I requires a commitment from everyone at all levels. In everything we do, we strive to deliver impactful work for our clients, and as your partner, your mission is our mission. This also includes championing your values of diversity, equity and inclusion. Our service to clients goes hand-in-hand with our responsibility to our own employees — something we call *Belong@Ketchum*: to cultivate a creative and inclusive culture where talent feels unapologetically empowered to bring their whole self to work.

Our approach to DE&I is built upon industry best practices, community and organization affiliations, and Ketchum's renowned communications and analytics expertise, which begins assessing the landscape to find an ownable opportunity for the brand, then asking ourselves the right questions along the way.

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