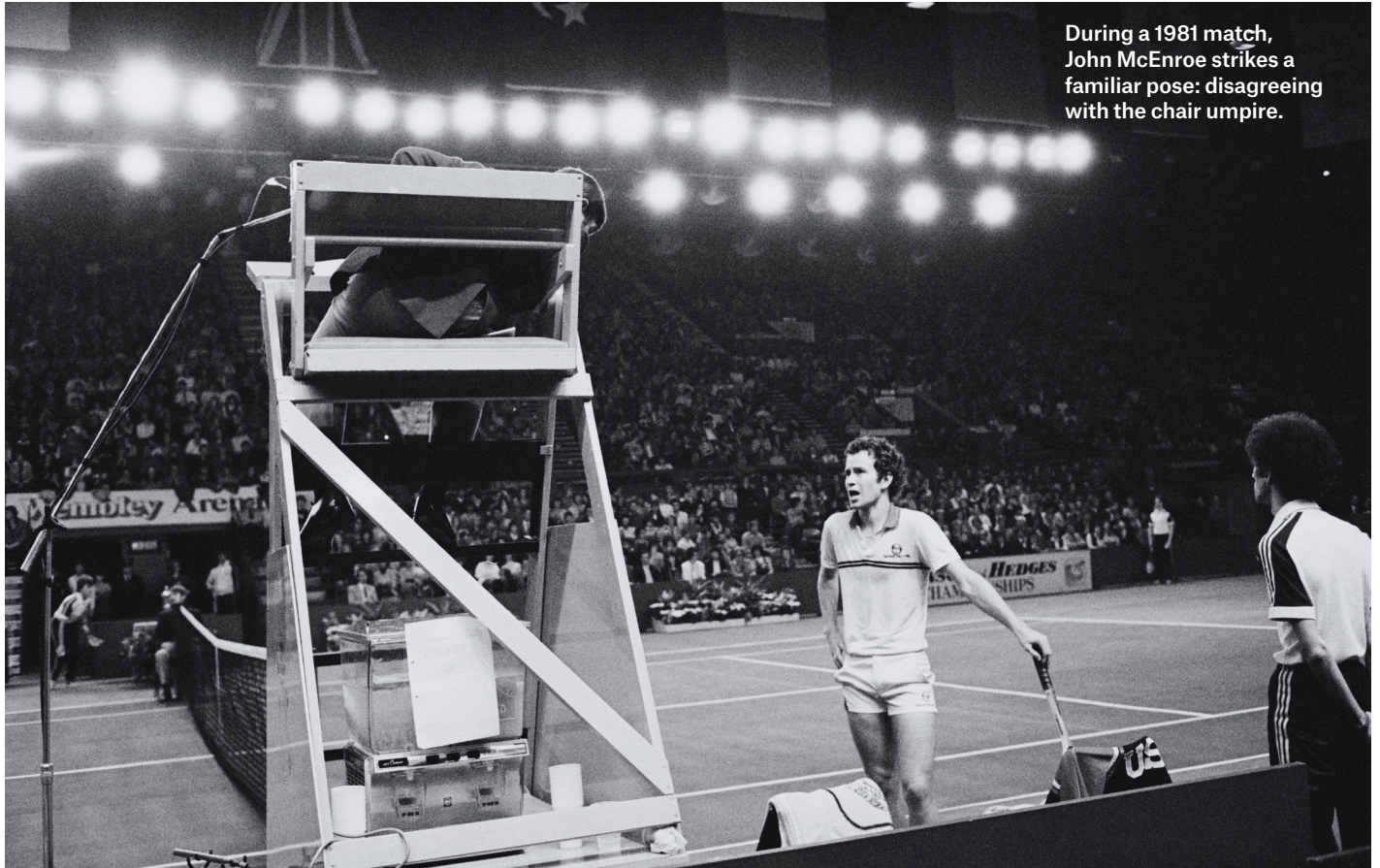


SPORTSLIGHT

Observations, insights & analysis from around the world on a medley of topics.



During a 1981 match, John McEnroe strikes a familiar pose: disagreeing with the chair umpire.

Disrupting Like McEnroe

He challenged everything, to his benefit. **By Matt Shepherd-Smith**

IN THE REALM OF PERFECTION IS A 2018 FEATURE-LENGTH DOCUMENTARY by the French director Julien Faraut about John McEnroe, focusing on the 1984 French Open at Roland-Garros. It is an extraordinary film, not least because in it we see something most unusual in sport. We see an elite sportsman whose behavior is at odds with that of every other professional tennis player. We see a man who doesn't harness his emotions in order to succeed, but instead feeds off his sense of persecution in order to achieve higher levels of performance. It is, in the words of another French visionary, Jean-Marie Dru, a "disruption."

Jean-Marie is an advertising veteran who coined the phrase "disruption" in relation to communications. It is best defined as the process by which one identifies the conventions of a business and its competitors, and upturns those conventions to find new room to grow. In other words, finding a way to relevantly differentiate your business to be more interesting to your audiences.

It takes a brave company to be a disruptor. It demands that you take a new and unknown path. It demands that you become a challenger.

John McEnroe was a challenger. He did things differently. He changed the game of tennis. Not only in how he played, but in how he saw the game. As the narrator says, "Björn Borg puts the ball in the spot where the other player is not. McEnroe puts it in a place the other player will never reach." But it was not solely his playing style that set him apart, it was how he channeled the injustices around him that really made him different.

McEnroe had an intensity that shut out reality and prevented rational, conventional behavior. He prowled the court, absorbed the jeers, fought umpires, smashed racquets, railed against the media, shouted at the world around him, and played tournaments in a state of torment and tears. It was, and remains to this day, unlike anything we have seen before. John McEnroe dislocated the norms of tennis for the benefit of the game. He showed the benefit of being a challenger.

The challenger philosophy has commonly been applied to advertising. But it is a philosophy as pertinently and effectively applied to any other form of business transformation or communications need and, I would argue, is needed now more than ever. Businesses are having to pivot to cope with the impatient audience demands of a fast-changing world. Climate, COVID, social injustice, cyber-insecurity, digitalization ... the long list of new hurdles goes on, and they all need careful navigation. As a consequence, we are seeing audiences no longer categorized as corporate or consumer, but communicated to as stakeholders. And as stakeholders, we all have a stake in the big game of deciding whether these businesses succeed or fail.

To influence and cajole us, we are all being bombarded with more messages and more interruptions every day. And while businesses can reach us all individually or collectively, it is getting harder and harder to make us stop and take notice. Not just because messages are more plentiful, but because if it isn't relevant, disruptive, creative and thoughtful, your key stakeholders won't care. Your message won't get a second chance to make a first impression.

Good disruptions in communications are not easily found, but it shouldn't stop you from aspiring to find them.

A good place to start is by looking at the conventions that occur in a category. You will see many conventions that are perfectly valid and valuable, but many others that you can jettison to start to break from the pack. McEnroe saw the convention of every other player throwing the ball

directly upward to serve. So he did it differently. He threw the ball forward as well as upward, and leapt in the air to connect with the ball a yard over the baseline. He gained a yard of advantage over everyone else. He defied conventional wisdom.

A second answer might be in applying this disruption to our own working habits. Creativity thrives on change and chaos, and our enforced working restrictions demand that we do things differently. To that point, I suggest you periodically offer a creative brief to everyone in your organization and invite short-term "binge thinking." While your colleagues might be busy, they are looking for excuses to break from the tedium and engage their brains in new ways. Throw them a ball. Harness that collective energy around a business opportunity, where many will be encouraged to conceive ideas. A good idea can come from anywhere, now more than ever.

The other approach is to encourage the occasional focus on boredom. This may sound counter-intuitive, but letting your mind drift and wander away from the day-to-day will encourage your brain to find new ways to occupy itself. The result is often an unexpected flash of inspiration or train of thought that is distinct and unencumbered from your normal processes. A subtle disruption from the norm. The result? A differentiated thought. A way of seeing the game differently, and going where your competitors will never reach. ♦

Matt Shepherd-Smith is CEO of MerchantCantos, Brunswick's creative agency. He is based in London.

McEnroe had an intensity that shut out reality and prevented rational, conventional behavior.

Benchmark

A South African justice's decision models principled leadership for the long term, says Brunswick's Itumeleng Mahabane.

MUCH IS SAID ABOUT RESPONSIBLE, principled leadership in our world. Yet examples are rare—a natural reluctance given that principled leadership sometimes requires decisions that prove costly in the short term, notwithstanding their necessity in terms of long-term value.

Our short-term culture exerts a constant pressure, making values-based leadership harder. Yet, in an increasingly complex world where the social and the commercial spheres collide, principled leadership matters.

This conflict need not be seen as a trade-off. In many cases, principled decisions are recognized and applauded, bringing the leader respect far greater than any short-term discomfort.

On a cold winter morning, June 29, 2021, Sisi Khampepe, South Africa's acting Deputy



Chief Justice, ordered South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma to turn himself in to serve a 15-month sentence for contempt of court. She gave him 48 hours. Failing that, she ordered the Minister of Police and the national police commissioner to arrest him within three days.

She knew that what she was doing could provoke strong reactions. It was an exercise of

the maxim, "let justice be done though the heavens fall."

Less than 10 days following that judgment, a range of actors unleashed urban chaos in Johannesburg, Durban and Pietermaritzburg, three of South Africa's largest metropolitan areas. Debates continue as to whether the riots were organic uprisings or a coordinated insurgency by the former president's loyalists. The

orgy of destruction overwhelmed an underwhelming police force, leading citizens to take "order" into their own hands. More than 300 people died, supply chains from fuel to medicines were thoroughly disrupted. President Cyril Ramaphosa mobilized the largest domestic deployment of troops since the end of apartheid.

Yet, while society and legal minds were divided about the sentencing, no one blamed Justice Khampepe for the fallout—the opposite, in fact: She is celebrated. The judgment is seen as one that will likely serve as an important precedent, potentially changing the way the country regards the Constitutional Court.

Her clarity of purpose seems to demand the rest of society step up where leadership is concerned. The judgment was crucial in signaling the importance of a rules-based Constitutional democracy. While it has come with the short-term costs of disorder and lawlessness, it is likely to prove critical to the country's long-term resilience. ♦

Itumeleng Mahabane is a Brunswick Partner based in Johannesburg.



AS RECORD-BREAKING WILDFIRES destroyed trees, property and lives on millions of acres in the American West last year, the world was facing another type of wildfire: the continued viral spread of misinformation and disinformation. No less destructive in its own way, the rise of disinformation has repeatedly put assets, lives and public safety at risk.

Like forest fires, false narratives thrive in combustible conditions—political polarization, poor-quality information sources and high levels of public distrust in institutions are the dry tinder. Misinformation may spread from an honest mistake, while disinformation is deliberately wrong—a kind of arson. Social media picks up the sparks and spreads them across the internet. Disinformation can grow into a conflagration threatening society, corporate reputations and even basic functions of government—as witnessed in the US Capitol insurrection of January 6. Fueled by a months-long surge of false information, the violence that day resulted in the deaths of five people, the temporary suspension of congressional activities, threats to the safety of elected officials

Disinformation WILDFIRE

The metaphor for how disinformation spreads can be applied to combating it.

and the ransacking of the iconic halls of US democracy.

In a recent Brunswick survey, 53% of US respondents agreed that “CEOs and business leaders should do whatever they can to stop the spread of misinformation, even if it comes from public officials.” Yet only 25% thought business leaders were doing a good job of it. We at Brunswick have had many opportunities to describe how companies can fight back. Forest fires offer a conceptual framework: (1) know your risk level, (2) prioritize which fires to fight and (3) build firebreaks to protect key assets and to prevent the fire from spreading.

Know your risk level: Drought conditions make forests a higher risk than times of normal rainfall. Similarly, leaders should take stock of how risk to their organization’s interests changes around shifting

controversial financial, political and societal issues.

The first task in a counter-disinformation playbook should be an audit of vulnerabilities. This would include past controversies involving the organization, social media around the sector and specific actions planned or underway by the company.

Prioritize high-risk narratives: Which fires should you fight and which do you let burn themselves out? Those that threaten key or sensitive areas are a priority. Likewise, the fake narratives that matter most are the ones that threaten your license to operate, while others are only worth monitoring. We recommend a risk assessment framework to decide which false narratives can do the most damage. What is the potential impact of the narrative? Is it credible to key audiences? What is the penetration of the narrative?

Build firebreaks: Smart action in advance can create obstacles to the threat of misinformation and potentially contain the spread. This requires understanding your audiences, identifying your advocates and those who are undecided but persuadable, and then

optimizing your communications to ensure these audiences know your narrative.

At its heart, disinformation is aimed at eroding trust by assaulting motives and intentions. Disinformation narratives are often emotionally engaging. The counter is to clearly communicate your values and motivations to key audiences—the “why” of what you do. This can build reservoirs of good will and trust that are harder for fake narratives to penetrate.

As with all corporate communications crises, it is better to have a plan of action in mind before an actual need arises—in this case, a disinformation playbook. This detailed action plan—even if it needs to be adjusted to handle unforeseeable events—can be a critical, calming guide for handling a fake news inferno. Ultimately, such preparation will also help clear away the combustible material, making you less appealing for the fire-starters of false information and conspiracy, and more resilient in the event your organization becomes a target. ♦

Preston Golson is a Director based in Washington, DC.

ESG Influencers

Brunswick Insight analysis examines the voices driving the ESG conversation.

ESG HAS SEEN A 150% INCREASE in news coverage over the past two years, according to Dow Jones Factiva. But who, or what, actually drives that coverage? Brunswick Insight identified the leading English-language ESG voices on Twitter from every continent. From there, we used keyword searches and machine learning to build an online-audience panel of more than 1,000 top influencers. The top 10 averaged 86,000 followers and included a former portfolio manager, academics, climate scientists, a best-selling author and a member of US Congress.

The panel of 1,000 generated over 30% of all Twitter-related ESG conversation over the past six months—an outsized influence for a relatively small group. The conversation focused less on individual companies and brands than on broader topics and ongoing debates. Centered around some combination of sustainability,

climate change and technology, top themes included: sustainable finance; CSR and what it means; the feasibility of achieving net zero; electric vehicles; and artificial intelligence.

Judging from these current debates, a few questions stand out as an indicator of where the conversation may be heading:

- **Can ESG affect climate change while still offering a return-on-investment?**
- **Has the pandemic better set the stage for ESG and greater “green” outcomes?**
- **How can we fight “greenwashing,” where companies exaggerate their efforts, and what is the potential role here of AI?**
- **What is the role of cryptocurrencies, particularly given the power they consume?**

All this means companies face long odds if they want their own ESG efforts to grab the spotlight. Our analysis suggests a company’s content would perform better if it were less about themselves. Companies considering joining in would be well-advised to actively monitor the space. The nature of these discussions is unforgiving and there is a lack of consensus around some core ESG aspects. Better to first understand the conversation and the voices shaping it before offering their own. ♦

Antonio Ortolani is a Director in New York. Additional reporting by Associates Hannah Rückel in San Francisco and Zayd Mabruk in Dallas.



Beyond Beautiful

London’s historic Kew Gardens offers its science in the service of humanity. By Senior Advisor Ben Hirschler.

CAN A BOTANIC GARDEN HELP save the world? Richard Deverell is convinced the answer is “yes.” The Director of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is putting science at the heart of the 261-year-old institution to align the entire work of the famous gardens behind the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change.

Deforestation is increasing, global emissions are disrupting weather patterns, new pathogens are threatening crops and illegal trade is eradicating entire plant populations. Meanwhile the challenges Deverell faces are also huge. Ticket sales at Kew were hit hard by the pandemic, punching a £15 million hole in 2020 income and forcing the organization to furlough more than 50% of its scientists.

“We feel a growing sense of urgency, yet at the same time there is frustration,” he said. “Kew can help shape and implement solutions, as well as explain to people why it matters, but honorable intentions are not sufficient. You need the resources to make a difference.”

Kew Gardens is a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the banks of the Thames. In 2019, a record 2.2

million visitors admired its soaring Victorian glasshouses, beautiful trees and carefully nurtured flowerbeds—over 1 million living plants. But the gardens are only part of its story.

Hidden away in its herbarium, out of sight of the visitors, are 7 million plant specimens dating back more than two centuries, including some collected by Charles Darwin. The oldest are from India and were gathered in 1696. A matching fungarium contains more than 1.25 million specimens of often weird and wonderful fungi, which carry with them a faint aroma of mushroom soup. And 30 miles to the south, at Wakehurst, Kew’s wild botanic garden, the Millennium Seed Bank contains 2.4 billion seeds, the most diverse wild plant genetic resource on the planet. These deep historical roots let Kew’s collections shed light on changes in the spread of species—from oaks and orchids to rust fungi. Scientists can reconstruct the extent to which forests and other ecosystems may have been destroyed by human action or climate change.

A report from Kew in September 2020 estimated that 40% of the



world's plants are now threatened with extinction—a jump from one in five plants thought to be at risk in 2016. Researchers fear species are disappearing more quickly than science can identify them. That chimes with other recent warnings, such as a sixth mass extinction, caused by humans, described in a 2020 film by renowned natural historian and former Kew trustee Sir David Attenborough.

Leveraging Kew's expertise to counter these threats requires a more proactive approach, Deverell believes. "We need to change the nature of the science we are doing, and we need to speak with more urgency and bluntness about the

"If people believe Kew is nothing more than a lovely heritage garden, we will have failed."

biodiversity challenges we face," he said. "We have got to reach beyond the garden walls."

Last August, the government of Cameroon canceled a logging concession for Ebo Forest, one of the West African country's largest intact rainforests, after scientists at Kew documented the incredible array of plant species at risk. Environmentalists worldwide, including actor Leonardo DiCaprio, drew on Kew's work in their campaign

against the logging. In another initiative, Kew works with other conservationists in a program to identify priority forests around the world and create a library of tree DNA that can identify whether wood comes from illicit sources.

Deverell intends to double-down on such projects. A former BBC executive who took over at Kew in 2012, he is the 17th director of the venerable institution. He is excited about an invitation to advise Tanzania on ambitious plans to plant billions of trees across 5 million hectares—a multi-year exercise of expertise to select the right species for the right location. "The prize of getting it right is enormous and the cost of getting it wrong is equally enormous," Deverell said.

One huge technical task is to drag Kew's centuries-old specimen collection into the digital era. Stored on sheafs of paper in thousands of cardboard boxes holding pages with leaves, stalks and flowers from around the world, the data will be offered online, where researchers otherwise must visit Kew in person.

Kew also has an ongoing "Perception Shift" program to make the case for its scientific ambitions to supporters, staff and visitors, raising awareness of its mission beyond its much-loved public gardens. Kew's long legacy also holds issues to be addressed.

In the 19th century, Kew played a key role in the movement of valuable plants for agriculture and trade, with sometimes shameful episodes rooted in colonialism and racism. Kew has an urgent duty to confront this past, Deverell says. "The history is there, and we cannot brush this under the carpet. We have to take this very, very seriously—it will take years of determined focus," he said.

An even more unequal world is emerging from the coronavirus pandemic. For Deverell, Kew's role in the path forward is clear: The work must start by taking stock of the world's wild places and painstakingly enumerating the threats.

"If people believe Kew is nothing more than a lovely heritage garden, we will have failed." ♦

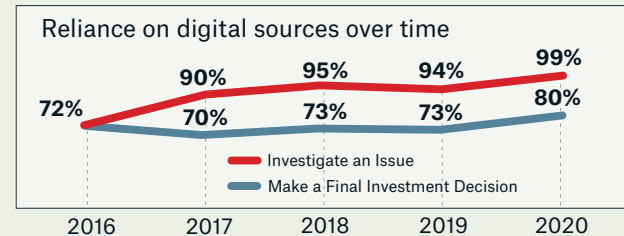
CHARTS: PETER HOEY, PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KEW GARDENS.

DIGITAL Acceleration

Findings from Brunswick's 2021 DIGITAL INVESTOR Survey

Remote working drove digital acceleration, with YouTube use and newsletter subscriptions up dramatically.

After holding steady for years, digital use accelerated in 2020.

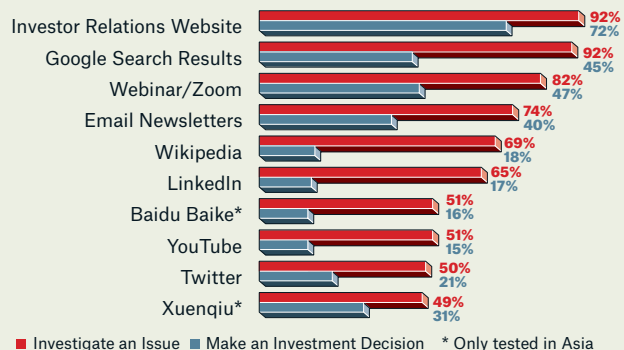


Fastest growing digital sources



Company IR pages are investors' most used and most trusted source of information.

Usage of investor relations websites outperform all other digital sources.



Investor Relations Websites

IR Websites were tested for the first time this year, and proved to be a go-to source for investors.

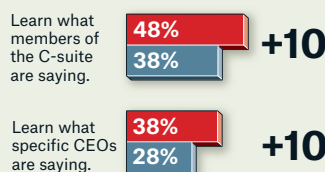
Region	Investigate an Issue	Make an Investment Decision
North America	92%	75%
Europe	90%	65%
UK	93%	74%
Asia	85%	52%

How helpful are the following actions that companies take to provide you with information for your work?

92% Having an IR website **87%** Issuing a press release

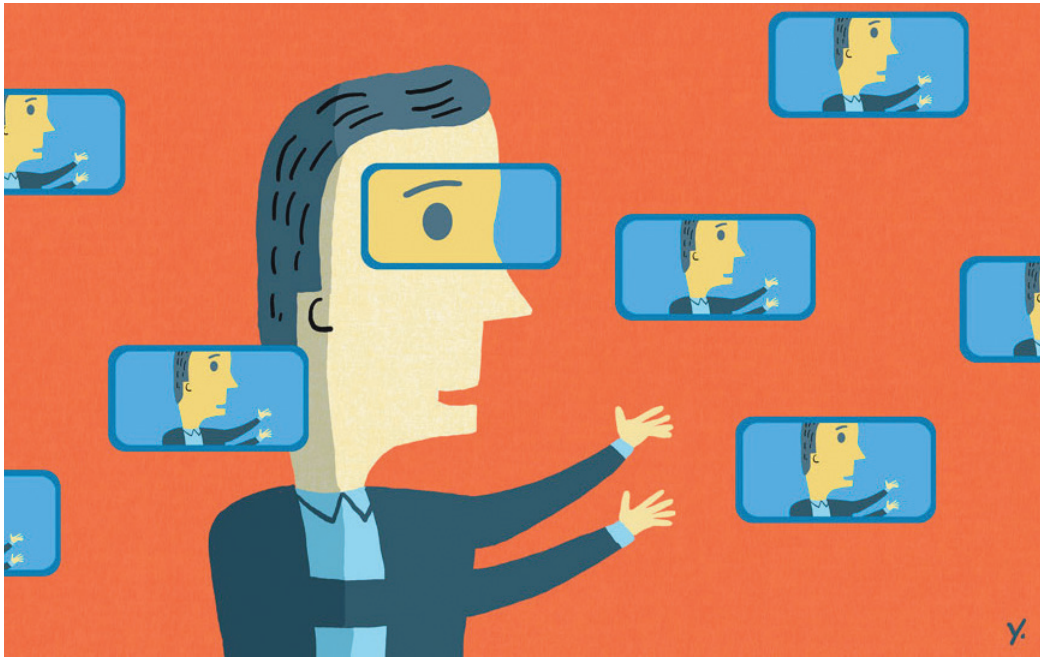
CEOs' social media accounts are increasingly important.

What are the reasons you use digital media platforms as part of your work?



The increased interest in what CEOs are saying signals the importance of keeping their social media channels **updated and relevant.**

Region	2019	2020	change
North America	39%	45%	+6
Europe	35%	53%	+18
UK	32%	48%	+16
Asia	57%	57%	0



Leadership **FACE TIME**

ZOOM FATIGUE” SAYS MORE about our exhaustion with meetings than it does our relationship with video technology. Video remains the next-best thing to an in-person conversation—what would you think of a boss who fired you over email?—and far more humanizing and interesting than text. As an investor, would you rather read a release about a new factory opening or be invited to a virtual tour? Are you more likely to reach the end of a 500-word update or a 30-second video?

Yet video remains a tool only a fraction of executives use regularly. It’s difficult to reconcile: If a leader is going to spend time communicating, why not do so in a way that social media platforms prioritize and that their audience is more likely to engage with?

To the point about social platforms—their algorithms weight video content above article-length blocks of text; they know video is more effective at capturing your attention. That’s why video typically plays automatically as you scroll—watching takes less effort than clicking a link. In short: The same message, delivered by

Business leaders need to be seen and heard, not just read. Video can build connection at scale.

the same leader, will reach more people on social media as a video than as an article.

The good news is you don’t need a full-production crew anymore to produce footage. The ubiquity of Zoom, FaceTime, and reality television have normalized a “come as you are,” unscripted aesthetic—overproduced videos seem insincere. Still, there’s more to it than just pressing “record.” Here are my top tips for executives and their teams getting started:

1. Clarify your message and audience. Know what you want to say ahead of time. Most leaders I work with use brief memory joggers on a single note card or memorize key passages. Your audience should not only inform that message but also how you deliver it. Front-line employees don’t want to see executives in suits talking in corporate-speak. Investors aren’t likely to enjoy an earnings recap filmed by an executive walking down a busy street. Chris Kempczinski,

President and CEO of McDonald’s, strikes the perfect balance. His videos, often filmed in his office or at a restaurant, show a mix of production values, ranging from the CEO filming himself on a smartphone to moments that are more composed: relaxed and dressed in business-casual attire with nice lighting and sound. He is often unscripted, sharing personal anecdotes that showcase his personality.

2. Remember the “Three S” setup. While you can record directly to your phone rather than booking a studio, you’ll look and sound better with attention to Stability, Set and Sound. Stabilize your phone with an inexpensive phone tripod. Choose a set with decent lighting. Improve your sound with a laval mic.

3. Practice makes progress. You might nail your video on the first take, but chances are you’ll benefit from rehearsal. Practice builds confidence and confidence is persuasive.

4. Put first things first. A person typically spends less than three seconds viewing any piece of social media content. That time decreases for younger demographics and those on phones. Make sure the most important message is up front. Ask if your

video will resonate if your audience sees only the first frames—because that’s all most will see.

5. Be brief. Every second beyond the first 30 increases the likelihood you’re speaking to an empty room. For more time, consider breaking the footage into multiple videos or providing more depth in a supplemental link.

6. Find a unique angle or opening hook. Thousands of videos are uploaded daily. What’s going to make yours stand out? Unexpected camera angles or locations can help. bp CEO Bernard Looney does this masterfully. A video response to an Instagram comment placed him in a casual pose followed by an eye-catching graphic sequence to pique followers’ interest and reinforce a people-first leadership style.

7. Produce a silent movie. An estimated 70% of social video is watched without sound. Use captions and other non-verbal cues like a whiteboard, prop or motion graphics. If your video doesn’t work as a silent film, start over.

8. Extend a video’s lifespan. The most valuable asset in any Connected Leadership strategy is an executive’s time. Maximize any video content by thinking through all the ways you can leverage it. For a 5-minute video, you can create a 30-second cut for social media, host the long-form version on YouTube, post teaser snippets to Instagram or LinkedIn Stories, and craft quote cards for future reinforcement.

The point isn’t that leaders should abandon text. It’s that video can increase the scale and impact of the messages they’re already delivering. In a sense, leaders who fail to make use of video are like boxers choosing to punch with only one arm. The good news is that such a self-imposed disadvantage can be overcome with a little practice, giving leaders more ways to make their efforts land meaningfully. ♦

Craig Mullaney is a Partner based in Washington, DC and a New York Times best-selling author. His Connected Leadership column and newsletter spotlight digital and social media.