

SPOTLIGHT

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



Targeting UNTRUTHS

It's a depressing fact that facts don't carry the weight they once did, and still should. But there are ways to fight back against mis- and disinformation, says Brunswick's CHAD GIRON.

TEN MINUTES ON FACEBOOK OR TWITTER IS ALL IT TAKES TO DIAGNOSE the communications landscape as infested with “fake news.” The line between truth and fiction is heavily blurred by deepfakes, partisan media outlets and old-fashioned lies, emanating even from individuals empowered to lead governments and institutions.

Professional communicators and journalists are trained to believe that “the truth” is a kind of curative tonic for their audiences. If individuals could only be exposed to the truth about a topic then, surely, their passions and opinions would orbit around the gravitational pull of facts and reason. This is simply not true.

“The truth,” and its foot soldiers, facts, face several opposing forces. Some are endemic to our modern media environment and the mechanics of social media. Some are simply human nature. All contribute to a dynamic wherein relying upon “the truth” and facts to convince audiences is a risky if not a losing strategy.

The most powerful opposing force is reach. Misinformation is more popular—way more popular—than truth. It reaches far more people. Recently, a client was the subject of a large volume of false and misleading online content. Their media team then dedicated a significant amount of time to help reporters source and substantiate the accurate content.

At Brunswick, we examined the reach and engagement of the accurate articles versus the articles with false or misleading information, and the result was dispiriting. On average, the corrected content received only 2 percent of the engagement of the most popular misinformation articles.

In other words, “the truth” sells nowhere near as well as falsehoods.

Follow-up focus group research revealed that many individuals in the client’s target audience weren’t aware of the existence of fact-checking websites. Those who were aware of fact-checking sites perceived their content to be no more trustworthy than misinformation. Among these individuals, an affinity for misinformation lingered even after being shown that it was false.

This brings us to a second force opposing the effectiveness of truth: human nature. Misinformation is more widely shared because it is more interesting. Whether it’s today’s tabloids or the penny dreadfuls of the Victorian era, salaciousness sells.

Misinformation is often filled with narratives featuring powerful, well-known individuals and organizations allegedly engaged in outrageous activity. These fantastic stories are designed to generate clicks regardless of the cost to reputations, public discourse or public policy. They are packaged to look like news to lend their content legitimacy—all the better to influence you—but they are not remotely beholden to journalistic integrity.

A third force opposing truth is the economic value of clicks. Social media platforms are built on algorithms that encourage “engagement,” regardless of content veracity. Let’s face it, cute cat videos aren’t being shared because they inform public discourse. The structure of social media favors content that is often crafted to inflame emotions, reinforce existing prejudices and entice users with irresistibly amazing assertions. The more clicks, the more dollars.

In an environment where fighting falsehoods with fact-checking is disadvantaged at best and doomed at worst, what are some ways to push back against the tide of misinformation?

First, understand that truth does bear power. In fact, the most successful misinformation contains a kernel of truth. For organizations, misinformation often revolves around distortions or misrepresentations of actual products or operations. Activists, competitors or even disgruntled employees are apt to misrepresent executive motives, how a company operates or how it sources materials. In these cases,

the misinformation may brush up against a truth while presenting a distorted vision of it.

Second, recognize the power of narrative. In correcting the record or checking facts or rebutting misinformation, what often works best is the creation of a competing and more compelling narrative. To maintain integrity and trust, that story should absolutely be fact-based, but it should elucidate motivations.

In the case study mentioned previously, we researched what elements of storytelling would help build trust and neutralize the negative effects of misinformation. One of the most effective narrative ingredients was to explain motivations and clearly state positive values and intentions.

Once a competing narrative has been created, it must be distributed at scale to relevant audiences. This needs to be a multi-channel effort involving earned media, paid media and owned channels, including websites and social media channels.

When it comes to reaching audiences at scale, traditional media outlets, also known as mainstream media, are invaluable for their large reach and relatively high trust levels.

Aside from earned media, the two most important channels in sharing a narrative are Google search and YouTube, respectively the number one and number two search engines in the world. They are the first place a wide range of audiences turn to research an issue or verify information.

Another way to neutralize misinformation is to use third parties to help amplify the reach of your narrative and bolster your reputation online with their implied or explicit support. When pushing back against misinformation, third parties with large, engaged and loyal social media audiences can serve as force multipliers.

In a world of unscrupulous media, malicious actors and algorithms seemingly programmed to reward falsehoods, it isn’t enough to know in your heart the truth about you and your organization. You must be prepared to broadcast that truth in a long and complex war of information. ♦

Chad Giron is a Director in Brunswick’s office in Washington, DC, specializing in digital strategies content development.

United for Africa

Brunswick’s Itumeleng Mahabane sees an opportunity in the dire global crisis.

WHILE EARLY IN THE PANDEMIC, developed countries faced the most significant public health impact, it is now developing countries that face the brunt of structural and systemic risk. The World Bank predicts the first annual rise in global poverty since 1998. Africa will be especially hard hit and that will boomerang to the developed economies.

Global solidarity is crucial to meet global challenges to health and prosperity. For much of this year, at the precise moment that we most needed a Keynesian effort of multilateral coordination, the world instead was retreating to national interests.

Finally, in November, the G20 responded with a groundbreaking



unified approach to debt restructuring for the world’s poorest countries, which has received broad support. The US is willing to consider extending the agreement to middle-income nations. Vaccine breakthroughs and a political shift in the US create further impetus to expansion.

Africa’s nations will be set back decades and will have their financial capacity obliterated by COVID-19. The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, already at risk before the pandemic, could now be put beyond reach.

In April, South Africa dropped decades of resistance to the

International Monetary Fund, inviting emergency assistance to address COVID-19. While political debate about it continues to rage, the \$4.3 billion loan now appears clearly insufficient. The National Treasury estimates the economy will only recover to 2019 levels in 2024. Most other nations in Africa face far worse outcomes.

Multilateral institutions will have to innovate more deeply and international cooperation must move beyond the Bretton Woods institutions. New infrastructure will be needed, a fact underscored by the logistical challenges of a COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

However, given some of the recent political changes in major economies, it is possible that the changed world we see on the other side of this crisis will be one built more firmly on cooperation. ♦

Itumeleng Mahabane is a Brunswick Partner based in Johannesburg.

Connected Leadership: Communicating from the outside-in

How can CEOs engage a WFH workforce? Fewer all-company emails and more social posts, says CRAIG MULLANEY.

THE PANDEMIC HAS FORCED even tech-resistant leaders to hold video meetings and attend webinars. They’ve seen that technology can’t replicate the benefits of meeting face to face, but it can foster connections that otherwise wouldn’t have happened—and create new opportunities in the process.

It’s a lesson CEOs should bear in mind as they engage their WFH workforces. Many are trying to stay connected today by recreating events on video: happy hours, office visits, town halls, etc. Others have resorted to larger doses of familiar digital tools: emails, newsletters, intranet posts. These are great at conveying information, not engaging people. How many of us respond to a CEO’s all-company email? When does a leader’s intranet post generate more than perfunctory comments?

Counterintuitively, the route to better internal engagement runs through external platforms. Whether LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook, these platforms were designed to connect people. Liking a CEO’s post or leaving a comment somehow doesn’t feel daunting, so we actually do it. This, in turn, creates opportunities for the leader to respond to those comments or likes—dozens of connections that a read-but-not-responded-to email wouldn’t have generated.

It helps that social platforms encourage humanity, an ingredient all too often lacking in internal efforts. Picture a typical all-staff email from a CEO: formal, long, and carries the



fingerprints of multiple authors. Town halls and newsletters often feel similarly scripted and inauthentic. Social media, by the kind of content it lends itself to, has a way of injecting warmth and humanity. That’s a critical ingredient of engagement—and leadership. We want to know who leaders are before we trust what they say, let alone connect with their agenda.

That humanity flows, at least in part, because leaders can use more than italics and underline to express themselves on social platforms. Every major platform offers the ability to engage via live or recorded video and, unexpectedly, the less polished the production, the more authentic and engaging they appear. A LinkedIn article with embedded images and pull-out quotes is more striking than a simple plain-text email. Whatever the channel, leaders can tell richer stories in ways that reveal their voice and style.

Another practical benefit: reach. In many industries, employees don’t use an intranet or have an email address. But they all have a phone and most use social media. Go where your audience is; don’t expect them to find you.

And crucially, publishing a message for internal audiences on an external platform lends greater credibility to the message. It’s one thing to speak behind closed doors—another to say it publicly. This public-facing approach begets a virtuous cycle—employees are likelier to engage when CEOs demonstrate they’re listening—and sets a powerful example for colleagues to follow.

It’s an approach we’ve seen leaders use with great effect during these difficult months. Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg, for example, used Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to connect with employees throughout the pandemic and amid the protests against racial injustice. Hans communicated most weekdays, live, via the public employee Twitter handle “VZUpTo-Speed”—at times to an audience of more than 50,000.

Counterintuitively, the route to better internal engagement runs through external platforms.

For the CEO unsure where to begin: Pick a channel and post to celebrate your employees. Goldman Sachs’ David Solomon and Walmart’s Doug McMillon, for example, both routinely highlight the outstanding contributions of employees on Instagram. All it takes is a photo plus a short, authentic note of gratitude.

Imagine what that kind of public recognition means to the employee or their team—would you rather have your boss tell you in private you’ve done a great job, or deliver that message in front of thousands? And consider what that communicates about your company’s culture and personal leadership style—not just to current employees, but also prospective ones.

This approach, at its core, isn’t just about engaging employees from the outside-in; it’s also about bringing crucial outside perspectives in front of the CEO, providing them an unfiltered look of how the world actually sees them and their company. This crisis is an opportunity for executives to move beyond Zoom and email and use social technologies to reinvent and reinvestigate how they lead their organizations. ♦

Craig Mullaney is a Brunswick Partner based in Washington, DC.

“THE JOKE ABOUT INTELLIGENCE officers,” Brunswick Director Preston Golson says, “is that they smell flowers and ask, ‘Where’s the funeral?’ Because you get to a point where you have—I wouldn’t say a dim view, but a very realistic view of what goes on in the world.”

Preston, and George Little, a Brunswick Partner, are both former CIA officers. The two spoke with Brunswick Review in June about how partisanship has become an increasing threat to the integrity of national intelligence. At the same time, the death of George Floyd at the hands of police had triggered a global wave of civil unrest.

A former aide to the Director of National Intelligence, Preston also served as CIA Spokesperson, Chief of CIA’s Public Communication Branch in its Office of Public Affairs, and Chief of Communications for the Agency’s Directorate of Digital Innovation. George was Assistant to the US Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and Pentagon Press Secretary, and CIA Director of Public Affairs.

You can read the full interview, “Fragile Legitimacy,” online at www.brunswickgroup.com/review. Below is a sample of their responses.

ON WHITE HOUSE ATTACKS ON INTELLIGENCE

GEORGE: My colleagues at the CIA wake up every single day thinking, “How am I going to get this information and characterize it in the most truthful, meaningful way for the President and the Vice President and other national security policymakers?” I worked in a Republican administration. I worked in a Democratic administration. Didn’t matter...

There is a great deal of concern that the independence of the intelligence community will erode, become increasingly politicized, that it will be used in many of the same ways that governments and other societies use their intelligence communities and militaries—to drive political

Intelligence Report

Two former CIA officers, now with Brunswick, discuss the past and future of the US.

ends for their own reasons, for their own constituencies.

PRESTON: There really is a selfless commitment to the ideals of America that are held deeply by people in the intelligence community. Not saying it’s perfect.

But the Constitution, the rule of law, the American way of life—they believe all those things very strongly. And a lot of the CIA’s ethos was built out of the Cold War. We defeated the Soviet Union, right? Our ideals versus their ideals. Despite our many shortcomings as a nation, we’re supposed to be better than our adversaries. That’s something we’ve always told ourselves.



ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEJAR

To see some of those things called into question just kind of strikes at some of the fundamental ethos.

Both the intelligence community and the Department of Defense are given tremendous powers to secure the country. The deal that they’ve struck with the American public is that there’s going to be oversight, lack of partisanship, following the rule of law, to utilize those authorities and capabilities around the world. So there’s a concern that if the intelligence community is seen to be politicized (as it is in many other countries), that will lead to an overall delegitimization of the work and it will be seen as just another partisan agency.

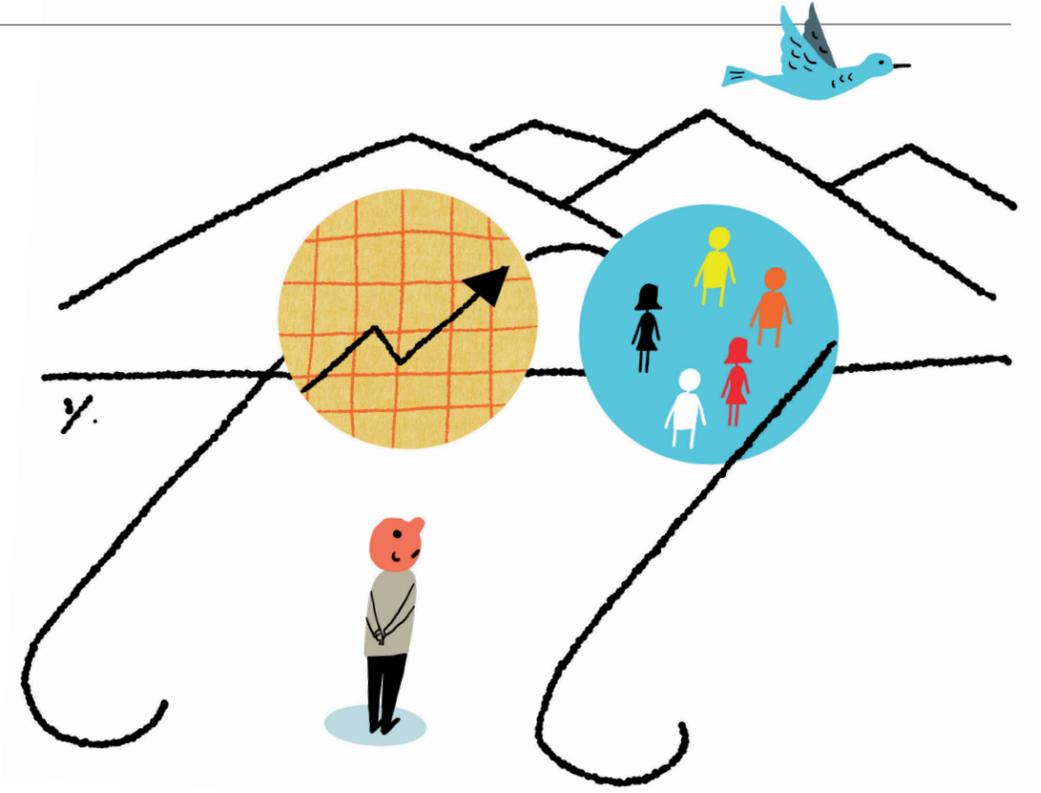
ON THE GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS

PRESTON: As an African American, I see this as a longstanding issue that’s spanned administrations. People are protesting against systemic issues that are deeply ingrained in the founding of our nation. We saw 400 years from when the first slave ships landed on our shores...

One of the things I’ve been thinking a lot about recently is how much people are surprised when they shouldn’t be surprised. If you go back to every decade of the 20th century, you find a period of racial unrest and race-related riots usually tied to cases of brutality—Martin Luther King’s assassination is one. Each decade there are examples of it. Yet we act as if it’s a surprise every time it happens. So there’s an element of strategic failure and intelligence failure. Companies have to ask themselves why this keeps happening.

GEORGE: Ultimately you have to match words with deeds. Corporations will be held to account on what they do to change the situation, to make profound change and to follow up on their commitments, not just within their own companies, but in society writ large. Even 10 or 20 years ago, companies weren’t expected to play that role in society... Now it’s vital. ♦

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES YANG



Familiar Face of GOOD

Centuries-old traditions in Asia offer new value. By **TIM PAYNE, JOANNA DONNE, DAISUKE TSUCHIYA and YOICHIRO SATO.**

IN 17TH CENTURY FEUDAL Japan, a class of merchants known as the Omi Shonin practiced the inclusive capitalism that the rest of the world, centuries later, is embracing as “the new paradigm.”

Associated with the province of Omi, these merchants travelled the country, buying goods from the cities and conducting trade from Hokkaido in the north to the tip of Japan’s southern Kyushu island. The Omi were strongly aware of their status as outsiders and that their livelihood depended on building long-term, trusting relationships.

Their philosophy, Sanpo Yoshi, continues to have an influence in Asia. The name means “good for three parties.” The Omi intended to make money, but knew that their

success was dependent on their customers and the communities in which their customers lived. Sanpo Yoshi holds that a successful business must also benefit others.

The benefits split three ways: Urite Yoshi (売り手よし), or Good for the seller; Kaite Yoshi

(買い手よし), or Good for the buyer; and Seken Yoshi (世間よし), or Good for society. In return for their trade, the Omi would build schools and bridges, support local shrines and even pay taxes for poor families, expecting nothing in return.

This approach made them exceptionally successful through the 17th and 18th centuries. And it lives on in modern Japan as a hallmark of good business. In research conducted by Brunswick in 2016, 80 percent of respondents in Japan felt business can provide solutions to major challenges—by far the most positive response of the 24 markets surveyed.

Among Western markets with the lowest trust, including the US and the UK, the response was barely half of that. Japan’s corporations are sometimes criticized for a lack of emphasis on shareholder return, but they have clearly won the trust of stakeholders.

A BRUNSWICK SURVEY FOUND THAT IN JAPAN,

80
PERCENT FELT BUSINESS COULD OFFER SOLUTIONS TO SOCIETY’S MAJOR CHALLENGES.

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

In China, in the early days of the republic and in the absence

of a flourishing private sector, major state-owned enterprises, or SOEs, were established and tasked with nation building. More than just an employer, these businesses influenced the health of the community. Since the late '70s, as the nation's private sector has developed, many of its biggest businesses have been partially privatized yet they still underpin society.

"Historically, a major SOE in China looked after the fabric of the lives of workers and their families," Fu Chengyu, former Chairman of Sinopec Corporation told us. "Most of the social and domestic amenities were provided by the company. More recently, in my time running Sinopec, while we faced out to the international capital markets and recognized a listed company's responsibility to generate profits, as Chairman I was still very clear Sinopec was a community of several million families, not just the one million directly on the payroll."

Separate from the Chinese model, many of Asia's emergent champion businesses come from a lineage closer in spirit to the Omi merchants. Banyan Tree Hotel and Resorts is one. Its founder and Chairman, Ho Kwon Ping, recently shared his views with us about how Asian business leaders can create their own authentic and locally appropriate model of capitalism.

"Capitalism, and any economic system, is culturally bound and the ethos of Asian civilization has to a large extent been communitarian in nature," Mr. Ho said. "There has been a strong need for communities to stress social cohesion and harmony as opposed to encouraging a model where the individual succeeds at the expense of others. It is therefore natural that Asia has embraced a model where the interests of the community, customer, employees, are all critical."

Mr. Ho and his wife, Claire Chiang, 25 years ago formed a luxury hospitality business headquartered and listed in

Singapore. From the very beginning, they had a deep sense that building a luxury resort in developing Asia could have tremendous consequences—not just environmental, but also social. As he put it, "How do you integrate yourself with the community when one day's room rate could be equal to a local villager's monthly income? You



"ASIA HAS EMBRACED A MODEL WHERE THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER, EMPLOYEES, ARE ALL CRITICAL."

Ho Kwon Ping,
Chairman of Banyan Tree
Hotel & Resorts

risk creating dependency and resentment."

To mitigate against this, Mr. Ho worked very hard to make sure that Banyan associates as well as guests appreciate that their interaction with each other is critical. The whole service culture is contained in a phrase they use: "I am with you." This is built on a foundation of empathy and understanding.

"When you have culturally insensitive people come and visit a place and disparage the culture and the people and the poverty, you develop an alienation and a sense of grievance against the people you are employed to serve. The service is no longer real but very forced. So we talk about this culture of 'I'm with you' and the idea that what I am

doing helps you and the local community and what you are doing helps me too."

Asked if this focus on communities and staff pays off in improved returns, Mr. Ho rejected the assumption.

"If people try to justify stakeholder capitalism on the grounds that ultimately your profits will increase, you are an apologist of stakeholder capitalism. If you really believe in it, it may well be true that you are not maximizing your profits."

PLANTING A SEED

The Asian conglomerate C.P. Group is today Thailand's largest private company, with global revenues of \$63 billion in 2018. But the company started out as a seed shop in Bangkok's China Town.

Arriving in Thailand 100 years ago barely able to speak the language, Chia Ek Chor named his business Chia Tai, taken from a Chinese expression for operating fairly and ethically.

"Conscious of our family's immigrant status and grateful for the generous welcome they received in Thailand, my father Ek Chor sought to 'give back to the country' by operating his business with honesty and integrity," says C.P. Group Senior Chairman Dhanin Chearavanont. "One of the first examples of this was seed products sold with an expiry date handwritten on the package, and a promise to exchange any that were deficient. Doing so guarantees the crop quality for farmers, whom C.P. Group counts as life partners. It was 50 years before Western retailers began to seriously adopt 'use by' and 'best before' dates and that speaks to the desire to do right by our customers."

The values remain deeply embedded in C.P. Group's culture and articulated through the Group's "Three Benefits" philosophy. "Both in Thailand and beyond, C.P. Group's priority has always been to benefit the country and the people. And only when those two priorities are met should the company seek to

benefit," the chairman said. "C.P. Group turns 100 next year and the three benefits philosophy will always be the guiding star to ensure our success wherever we invest for the next 100 years."

NOT ALL PERFECT

While the idea of stakeholder capitalism has long been culturally acceptable and even the norm in Asia, it would be wrong to imagine that it is a perfect model. The Western model of good governance has been slow to be thoroughly adopted and a fair share of corporate governance scandals in Asia have been the result.

"We have both a challenge and an opportunity that is very different from the West," says Banyan Tree's Mr. Ho. "We have embraced the idea of the broader community and done all kinds of things that are probably not always considered in the best interest of minority shareholders. Now we must adopt greater rigor in terms of defining our stakeholders and separation of interests."

Trust in business varies widely from region to region and doesn't translate automatically. In the US, only 43 percent of the population feel businesses are trustworthy. That means that even Asian businesses steeped in an inclusive culture need to be prepared to articulate their value, not just to domestic stakeholders, but internationally as well, in diverse markets.

Still, there is a certain arrogance in the West as it embraces stakeholder capitalism as its own thoroughly modern invention. Markets that have lived that philosophy for centuries may well serve as models for what that actually means. ♦

Tim Payne is a Brunswick Senior Partner and Head of Asia in Hong Kong. Joanna Donne is a Partner based in Singapore. Daisuke Tsuchiya is a Partner in London and Head of Japan, leading a team of more than 15 Japan experts and bilingual advisors around the world. Yoichiro Sato is a Director in Brunswick's Tokyo office, which opened in 2020.

The George Floyd Outrage: US Workers

SPEAK

Brunswick Insight's poll of employees reveals how they would like their companies to respond. By Mara Riemer.

AMERICANS ARE RIGHTLY outraged at the killing of George Floyd and are making their voices heard in the streets and online. We have seen a flood of corporate statements across the news media, social media and employee inboxes and they've generated a wide range of strong reactions.

To find out what workers expect from their companies, Brunswick conducted a poll of 1,192 US workers, including an over-sample of 292 Black workers, on June 1, 2020. We sought to understand their opinions and perceptions of companies speaking out on racial discrimination in America and what actions companies should take.

Public polling on issues of racial equality has been taking place since long before the civil rights movement. Our research is intended to collect data on how workers are viewing the statements and actions of their employers. Companies have been expected to speak out on social issues for some time now, and the expectation for them to do so is growing. That is reflected in our results.

TAKE A STAND When we asked workers if they expect their employers to take a stand on social issues, 31 percent said "yes" unequivocally and 41 percent said "yes, but only when the issue directly affects the company's business." Just over one quarter said "no." Black workers are even more likely to expect their companies to take a stand on social issues, even when they disagree with the position taken.

As younger generations enter the workforce, the expectation

that companies will address issues of social change and racial justice is likely to increase. Young people are significantly more likely to want to hear from leaders at their own company on George Floyd and racial discrimination: 52 percent of GenZ want company leaders to address his death and the protests specifically, compared

to 29 percent of millennials, 15 percent of GenX and just 10 percent of baby boomers.

And when companies do speak out, their voices are heard: Workers are paying attention to what companies are saying in response to the killing of George Floyd and the protests, with 68 percent of workers saying they are aware of companies issuing statements expressing support for racial justice.

THE BENEFITS In the eyes of workers, speaking up is much more likely to improve perceptions of a company than to hurt them. Over half (51 percent) of all workers say that speaking out in solidarity with protesters improves their view of a company compared to 37 percent who say that it would not affect their perceptions. The percentage of Black

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workers who say their perceptions would improve is significantly higher at 70 percent.

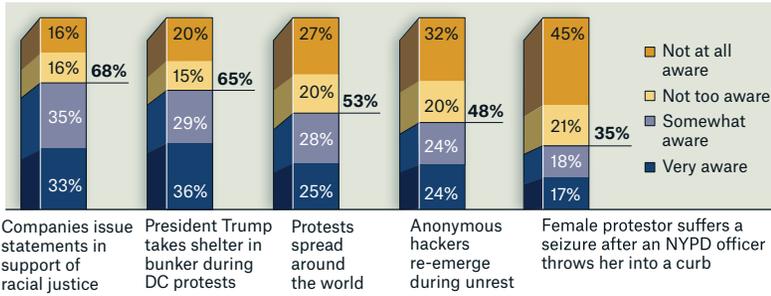
With GenZ and millennials the impact is overwhelmingly positive: 65 percent of GenZ and 57 percent of millennials say it would change their opinion for the better, as opposed to 4 percent and 10 percent, respectively, who say it would change for the worse. Baby boomers are more evenly split: 36 percent say it would improve their opinion of the company and 22 percent say it would worsen it.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE At the time of this writing, there are many companies that have yet to make a public statement and are wondering: Is it now too late? Will they come off as followers? Will their late commentary be viewed as inauthentic? While each company



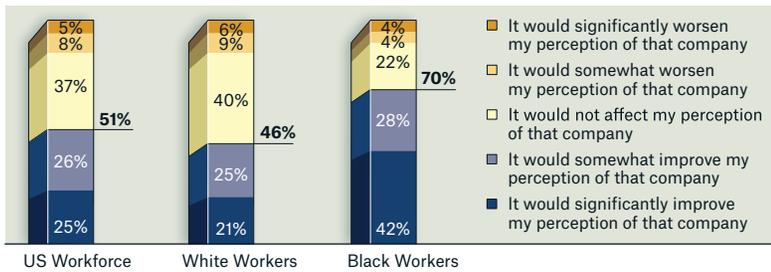
ILLUSTRATION: FRANZISKA BARCZYK

Awareness of COMPANIES SPEAKING OUT is High



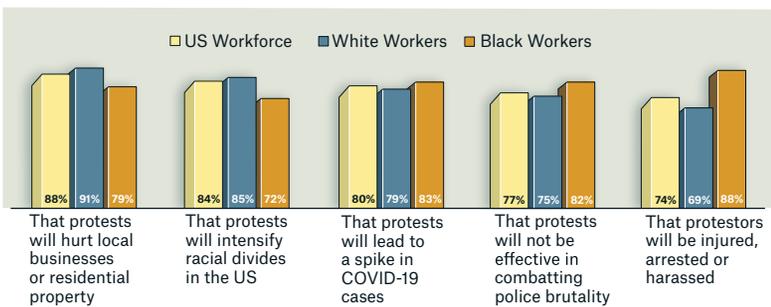
Almost seven in 10 US workers are aware of companies issuing statements expressing their support for racial justice—more than any other story we tested.

STATEMENTS OF SOLIDARITY Viewed Positively



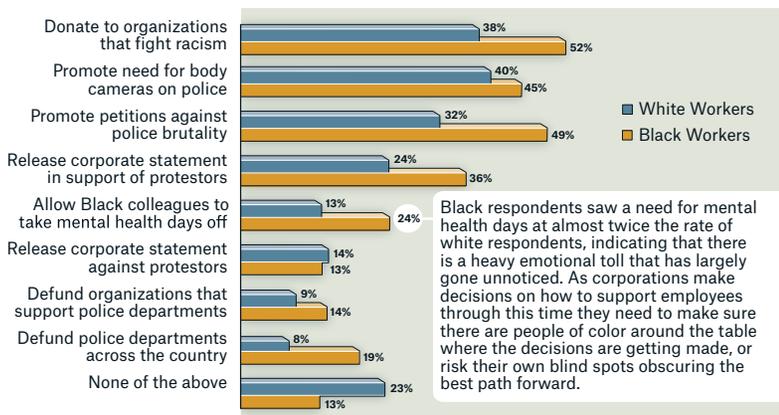
About half say that their perceptions of a company would improve if the company released a statement expressing solidarity with the protestors. Black workers are especially appreciative of the act.

TOP CONCERNS Differ Along Race Lines



Black workers' top concern was for protestors' safety; for whites, it was damage to property. White workers' No. 2 concern was worsening the racial divide; this was the lowest concern among Black workers.

Black Workers Want MORE ACTION from Companies



Black employees expect more corporate action than white workers. The gap is especially large when it comes to promoting petitions against police brutality. Companies should consider shifting from expressing solidarity with protestors to calling on police to do better.

must assess its own situation, the general answer is that it's not too late. Over 70 percent say that regardless of timing, it is important for companies to let their employees and customers know where they stand.

GenZ and millennial workers are even more likely to want to hear from companies on the protests regardless of timing: 82 percent and 70 percent respectively say companies should speak out regardless of timing.

ACTIONS OVER WORDS

Importantly, workers want more from corporations than just statements. The data suggests that the next few days and weeks will come with increased expectation of follow-through and commitment. Companies should be having conversations now about the next steps they will take. Workers believe that donating to organizations that fight racism and promoting the use of police body cameras are actions to prioritize.

Notably, nearly one quarter (24 percent) of Black workers agreed that companies should allow Black colleagues to take mental health days off—nearly twice the rate of white respondents (13 percent), and much higher than the 2 percent of baby boomers and 9 percent of GenXers who said the same. This indicates that the extent of the daily emotional toll that these events are taking on the Black community remains underestimated by the mostly white, largely middle-aged group that populates most boardrooms.

As corporations make decisions on how to support employees through this time when all Americans are feeling the stresses of the pandemic and are exasperated at the brutalities they have witnessed, leaders need to ensure that there are people of color around the table where the decisions are getting made, or risk their own blind spots obscuring the best path forward.

Only when we look back on these times will we know if this was the moment when things really changed. For now, what this means for companies is that they must consider how they fit into the conversation of today and the solutions for tomorrow. They must thoughtfully approach what they say, and then take action, to make those words authentic. ♦

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