



Take a Seat

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After pushing for this over many decades, corporate affairs has become a critical member of the management team and an important voice around boardroom tables. There is also now widespread acknowledgement of the importance of digital in every business, which is one of the reasons why right now is corporate affairs' time to shine.

Today, corporate affairs executives are routinely involved in conceptualising and developing business strategy. In recognition of the elevation of the role, the head of corporate affairs now, in the majority of cases, reports directly to the CEO and is positioned in the business as a trusted adviser. They understand their worth is often in how they challenge the thinking of other leaders in the business, rather than merely executing strategy that was predetermined with their little input.

The corporate affairs function has always been the conduit between the business and its internal and external stakeholders. Now there's more emphasis in identifying key influencers and building relationships with them before they are needed. There is also an inherent understanding that the most influential people are not necessarily the ones with the highest number of followers, or those that receive the most 'likes'. It's highly likely the top influences will have a valuable, small community of likeminded influencers.

As corporate affairs has taken its seat at the executive table, a fundamental shift in the way the role is approached has been required. Technical skills are a given, and the top corporate affairs professionals now have many other skills beyond being great communicators and managers of corporate reputations.

Importantly, their decisions and advice are based on sound information collected through the business's digital channels. This means increasingly, the corporate affairs team includes an analyst charged with developing insights from the data streams that feed into the corporate affairs function. Consequently, the corporate affairs and marketing functions are much more closely entwined.

But as part of the management team, there is also now an expectation that the head of corporate affairs will have strong business acumen and understanding of geopolitical and economic affairs, superior financial literacy and knowledge of legal principles. These skills are expected of many senior managers and as a leader in the business, the head of corporate affairs is no different.

As the corporate affairs function has been elevated, and as digital has become central to every organisation's DNA, the technical aspects have changed in tandem with the leadership facets of the top corporate affairs executive's role.

There's an acknowledgement that the barrier between social and traditional media is coming down. An organisation's social profile, as well as that of its staff and leaders, is the first point of contact.

As such, the ascendance of social is driving the day-to-day business of the corporate affairs function. Content creation is heavily centred on digital assets, with an emphasis on great social and video content, to drive the sharing behaviour of the underlying audience. The corporate affairs head is charged with guiding the team to uncover great stories in the business that genuinely capture the audience's attention and prompt them to engage with their online community around the business's content.

And while the core corporate affairs responsibilities and remits have diversified, the function's importance has been raised, some aspects of the work remain the same. Corporate affairs is still the guardian of the organisation's reputation. Additionally, it's the part of the business charged with starting and continuing conversations – internally and externally – that are most relevant. It's also corporate affairs that is responsible for building all-important relationships with third parties that will advocate for the business, one of the most powerful reputational tools available to any enterprise.



It's still corporate affairs that is responsible for identifying issues before they become serious for the organisation. It is the responsibility of the function to bring these issues to the attention of other managers so the business can build them into strategic thinking.

And of course, there's still the same emphasis on being reliable, authentic and trustworthy and the function is still valued for the insights it can bring into the business. Ultimately, corporate affairs is the valve between the organisation and the external environment. It's pleasing to see that this contribution is increasingly valued at the highest levels.

Ampersand Corporate Affairs Leaders

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