

THE EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS QUARTERLY

Q4 2026: Put the Human Back in Executive Communications

Three ideas for making leadership communication more meaningful—and more human.

[Chris Thiede](#) | [Voxia](#)

A Quick Note Before You Dive In

Thanks for reading.

There is no proprietary research in the pages ahead. No survey of 1,500 executives. No statistical models. No quadrants.

This is simply a collection of ideas I've been thinking about lately, based on my work with leaders and communicators, conversations with smart people, and what I've been seeing out in the wild.

This quarter, they all seem to come back to one idea: executive communication works better when we remember there's a human being behind the title.

That means using the CEO's voice for more than corporate messaging. Understanding how they see the world, not just what topics they're supposed to talk about. And sometimes getting them out of the spotlight altogether.

I've tried to keep this short, practical and maybe even a little entertaining. You should be able to get through it in about 10 minutes—and, I hope, come away with an idea or two you can put to work.

Take what's useful. Argue with the rest.

Thanks again,

Chris

Your CEO's Voice Has Gravitas. Don't Waste It!

Too often, I see companies use their CEO's voice as just another channel to hawk their products. And I think to myself, "What a waste."

Why? Because the CEO's voice* has gravitas. The title alone commands attention. But often the person behind the title has important sh*t to say. The kind of sh*t that can make people trust your company, believe in your mission, and want to be a part of your story.

For proof, I point to [Cardinal40's 2026 Thought Leadership Alpha Report](#). It's full of great information, but the money quote is:

"A CEO's words aren't a vessel for value created somewhere else. The words are the value."

Here's how you can make the most of the gravitas that your CEO's words can carry:

- Don't forget the "leadership" in "thought leadership." Use the ideas, experiences, and perspective to help people see something differently and move them somewhere.
- Make deposits in the "trust bank." Build trust over time by consistently giving something to your audiences. Then, when you need them to trust you, they will.
- Don't make the CEO say what the company can say. Reserve the CEO's voice for communication that benefits from their experience, judgment, conviction, or humanity.

But above all, don't turn your CEO's thought leadership (or any messaging) into a crummy commercial. That cheapens their voice and undermines trust.

Interested in learning more? [Read my full article on this topic](#).

**Note: The same principles can apply to other senior executives or subject matter experts.*

Understand Your CEO's Worldview. Then the Good Stuff Comes Out.

Founders and CEOs have a lot on their plates. Let's add another responsibility to the list.

Chief Storyteller.

According to a recent [article in Axios](#), “storytelling and community building have been a competitive advantage” for the CEOs who do it well.

But here's the rub: most don't know how to do it well. That's where you, as a talented communicator come in.

You have the chops to help your leadership tell better stories. But you need to get beyond the usual messaging briefs, strategic roadmaps, and content pillars we all love so much.

You need to understand their worldview.

When you understand how the CEO's experiences, beliefs, instincts and hard-earned lessons shape what they notice, value and believe, now you've got the good stuff. You can...

- Find stories and ideas that go deeper than corporate talking points
- Anticipate how the leader might respond to new issues and opportunities
- Give better counsel because you understand not just what they say, but how they think

You uncover it through conversation. Ask about experiences, decisions, frustrations, people and problems. When something interesting appears, follow the thread. Explore the tangent. Go down the rabbit hole.

Content pillars tell you what a leader should talk about. A worldview helps you understand what they actually have to say.

Want to dive deeper? [Read the full article](#).

Give Away the Spotlight

A lot of executives don't like talking about themselves all the time. It's a good instinct, because nobody likes someone who talks about themselves all the time.

Still, visibility matters. Storytelling matters. Building trust matters. If you don't toot your own horn, who will?

There's a surprisingly simple way to solve a lot of that: turn the spotlight onto others.

When leaders use their platforms to celebrate employees, customers, or even people they simply want to help, those people get deserved recognition. But something else happens.

Years ago, I had the opportunity to interview [Dr. Joe Phillips](#). He was known for celebrating his team at the Kansas City Public Schools technology department.

And when he did that, a funny thing happened. The volume and caliber of job applicants increased...at a school district that couldn't offer the high salaries and sexy job titles you'd find in Silicon Valley.

The best part is, celebrating others – especially your employees – gives you unlimited content possibilities. “People want to feel like what you do matters and that you contribute,” Joe told me.

- Celebrate employees for who they are, not just for milestones & achievements.
- Be specific. Name names. Don't just say “congrats to the whole team.” Single people out, one at a time.
- Make it come from the heart. If a CEO talks about how someone else impacts them personally, it shows a humility and respect that can't be faked.

Do this consistently and something interesting happens: you start attracting people who want to be part of the story you're telling.

As the saying goes, “Your vibe attracts your tribe.”

I wrote a more detailed article about this. [Check it out](#).

What This Looks Like in the Wild

One of my favorite CEOs to follow is [Nate Randle](#), CEO of Greenix and former CEO of Gabb. He regularly uses his platform to recognize others, help people who need it and share experiences that matter to him.

Here are some recent posts that exemplify the ideas I shared in this report:

Gravitas

He [offered several pairs of his own shoes](#) to single and widowed dads who could use them, asking nothing in return.

Worldview

He [shared personal photos and memories](#) from September 10, 2001. Not to make a business point, but because the experience meant something to him.

Spotlight

When a single mother of three needed a job, he [turned his platform over to her](#): “My page is yours.”

None of these posts promotes a company, product or service. But taken together, they tell you quite a lot about the person behind them.

Note: Nate Randle is not a client, and the inclusion of his posts here do not constitute an endorsement of me or Voxia. I just think he sets a really great example we all can learn from.

Your CEO Doesn't Need More Content. They Need More to Say.

We have more ways than ever to produce executive content. AI can draft it. Agencies can scale it. Content calendars can make sure we never miss a Tuesday.

None of that means we have something worth saying.

The opportunity in executive communications isn't to turn leaders into more efficient content machines. It's to understand what they believe, find the experiences and ideas worth sharing, and help them use their voices in ways that earn attention and trust.

Sometimes that means saying something important. Sometimes it means telling a great story. And sometimes it means pointing the spotlight at someone else.

The goal isn't more executive communication. It's more meaningful executive communication.

About the Author

Chris Thiede is an executive communications advisor and founder of Voxia. He helps leaders and communications teams uncover the ideas, experiences and stories worth communicating—and turn them into leadership narratives and communications that move people.

Here's how to get in touch:

[Send me an email](#)

[Visit my website](#)

[Book a 30-minute call](#)