

2026 TRENDS SHAPING

Comms & PR



COMMUNICATIONS

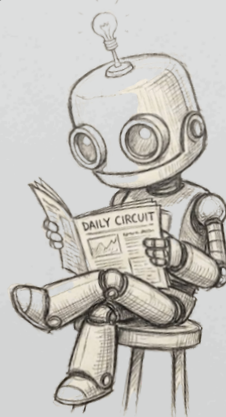


AI READS THE NEWS



Media coverage has always shaped public perception. Now, it also shapes the information AI systems deliver when audiences search for answers in your field.

As more people turn to tools like ChatGPT and Google's AI Overviews instead of scanning search results, these systems increasingly pull from journalism and earned media coverage to generate responses. Organizations investing in credible coverage and expert positioning are more likely to surface when AI tools provide answers and recommendations.



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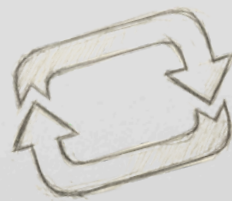
ONE STORY, NINE LIVES



Thanks to social media, news stories travel further. What once lived on your TV screen now meets you on every screen.

A broadcast clip becomes a TikTok with commentary, gets shared as a DM on Instagram, then sparks thousands of opinions across Threads. Earned media placements are the catalyst that sets this cycle in motion; digital platforms extend the life, driving up to four times the exposure.

In 2026, we'll continue to see this feedback loop expand.



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NEWSROOMS NEWSLETTERS

Journalists are reporting outside traditional newsrooms through newsletters and blogs, where readers choose to subscribe rather than passively scroll. As social feeds become crowded and short-form content dominates discovery, audiences are turning back to deeper reporting that offers context and perspective.

These independent journalists are building loyal communities around specific topics, creating direct relationships that rival engagement typical of larger news outlets. We'll see subscriber growth for independent news influencers continue to rise in 2026.

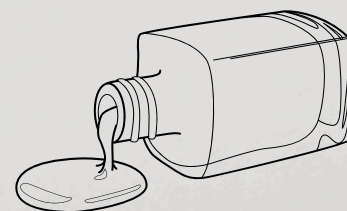


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AUTHENTICITY OVER POLISH

In 2026, the shift from curated to candid is accelerating. A wave of nostalgia is bringing back spontaneous, real-time posting styles reminiscent of social media a decade ago (e.g. the 2016 trend at the start of the year). Across social platforms, highly curated and minimalist content is giving way to videos that feel more personal, expressive, and in-the-moment.

For mission-driven organizations, authenticity is your strength. Audiences want to see behind-the-scenes footage, founder-led phone videos, and real employee voices.



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FREE SPEECH FRONTLINES

Free speech is under attack. The right to speak guaranteed in the First Amendment must be exercised if it is to be preserved. Those who can speak out must do so now. From social advocates and business leaders to researchers and academics, we all can — and should — raise our voices to power progress for social good.

Journalists reporting in America in 2026 will also need everyone's support more than ever.

