

PUBLIC OPINION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

A majority of the public want CEOs to communicate on social media during a crisis – but more than half say that engaging journalists is more important than social media

TORONTO, July 19th 2018 – Signal Leadership Communication Inc., a public relations consultancy for leaders dealing with digital disruption, today released the results of a new public opinion study of 1,000 Canadians conducted by Nanos Research that finds:

- **Six out of ten (61%) feel that it is important (28%) or somewhat important (33%) for CEOs to use social media to “directly communicate with the public” when a company has a crisis.** One in three (33%) say that this is unimportant (18%) or somewhat unimportant (15%), while six percent are unsure.
- **A majority (53%) say that when a company has a crisis, CEOs should “communicate primarily through their public relations team communicating with journalists in the media” while about a third (34%) say CEOs should “communicate with the public directly on social networks.”** Thirteen percent are unsure.

“By almost a 20-point margin, Canadians believe that in a crisis, engaging journalists is more important than social media,” says Bob Pickard, Principal of Signal Leadership Communication Inc. “While much of the public now want direct CEO communication on social media when major company problems occur, by far the preferred method of crisis PR is media relations with reporters.”

- **Still, almost two in three Canadians (65%) feel that it is important (33%) or somewhat important (32%) for CEOs to use social media to “share updates about the problem” when a company has a crisis.** Three in ten (30%) think that this is unimportant (15%) or somewhat unimportant (15%) while five percent are unsure.
- **Meanwhile, more than half of Canadians (53%) think that it is unimportant (30%) or somewhat unimportant (23%) for CEOs to use social media to “explain how he or she feels about the problem” when a company has a crisis.** Four in ten (41%) feel that it is either important (16%) or somewhat important (25%). Seven per cent are unsure.

“Directly through social media or indirectly through news media, the public wants communication from CEOs about what is going on during a crisis, and while they want to know the facts of the matter when something goes wrong with a company, they say knowing how the CEO personally feels about things on social media is less critical,” Pickard says. “However, real-life recent crisis experience suggests that the real-time emotional presence of CEOs communicated online can help prevent PR disasters.”

Signal Leadership Communication Inc. is a social public relations firm for executives and organizations with images to create, issues to manage, relationships to build, and reputations to protect in a digitally disrupted era. It is the one communications consultancy expressly dedicated to serving senior leaders with PR counsel that is both strategic and social, informed by a deep understanding of analytics, content, communities, media, sustainability and technology. The company is partnered with Nanos Research, one of North America’s premier market and public opinion research organizations.