

# Socializing Your CEO III:

From Marginal to Mainstream



## Introduction

Something transformational happened on the way to 2015: CEOs became "socialized!" After tracking the rates of CEO online and social media presence since 2010, Weber Shandwick has learned that a new day has dawned — CEOs have found their social footing.

Many hurdles traditionally stood in the way of CEOs' entry into the world of social media. Top barriers cited in prior Weber Shandwick research on "unsocial" CEOs in 2013 included: social media usage by CEOs was unusual for the industry or region, there was no proof that it returns value, there was no demand, and it was too risky. Interestingly, barriers such as legal obstruction and industry regulation were infrequently raised (**The Social CEO: Executives Tell All**, Weber Shandwick and KRC Research). Much to their credit, CEOs are overcoming these challenges and, to a growing degree, embracing the opportunities that come from being social.

Operating in an increasingly connected and transparent digital world where the general public is acutely attuned to what CEOs say and do, executives see online engagement as a prime opportunity for their chief executives to share their companies' stories and elevate the reputation of their companies. With eight in 10 global executives reporting that it is important for CEOs to have a visible public profile for a company to be highly regarded, online channels and social media become one set of tools for CEOs to increase their external equity. And doing so comes with reputational rewards: highly regarded companies are more than three times as likely as those with weak reputations to have a CEO who participates in social media. (The CEO Reputation Premium: Gaining Advantage in the Engagement Era, Weber Shandwick and KRC Research.)

Given the increasingly strong link between reputation and online CEO engagement, Weber Shandwick is committed to understanding how CEOs adopt and leverage social media and other web-based platforms. In today's digital world where over three billion people are connected to the Internet\* and stakeholders get much of their information online, we look to continuously provide deeper insight into ways CEOs can, and do, effectively broaden the reach of their messages and engage with audiences through digital means.

Weber Shandwick's 2010 study **Socializing Your CEO**: **From (Un)Social to Social** was one of the earliest quantitative explorations of CEO engagement through social media. This first installment found that the majority of CEOs from the world's largest companies were *not* socially engaged and were therefore missing out on opportunities to join the conversation and reach out to their customers. We refreshed this analysis in 2012 and found a dramatic increase in the sociability of the top CEOs. Still, though, there was room for improvement. Our newest study, **Socializing Your CEO III: From Marginal to Mainstream**, demonstrates that many of the world's top CEOs have finally overcome the barriers of using social networks and other online tools and provides 9 Tips for CEO Social Engagement to further inform the transformational movement of CEO sociability.

"CEO social engagement is a reputational must today. Business leaders are increasingly turning to digital platforms to share their company story, reach broader networks of stakeholders and join online conversations where their company is already being talked about. CEOs who don't embrace online communications risk being left behind."

- LESLIE GAINES-ROSS. CHIEF REPUTATION STRATEGIST, WEBER SHANDWICK

## What We Did

Weber Shandwick researched the online activities of CEOs from the top 50 companies in the 2014 Fortune Global 500 rankings. The list included 17 CEOs from the U.S., 19 from Europe, 11 from Asia Pacific (APAC), and three from Latin America (LatAm). We limit our research to the top 50 CEOs because these are among the most scrutinized executives due to the size of their organizations and they are the standard bearers of CEO reputation today.

We audited a range of sites and platforms to see how CEOs are engaging socially and compared these results to our 2010 and 2012 findings. We consider a CEO "social" if he or she does at least one of the following:

- Has a public and verifiable social network account, such as Facebook or LinkedIn
- Engages on the company website through messages (e.g., letters, quotes), pictures or video
- Appears in a video on the company YouTube channel
- Authors an external blog (i.e., one that is not only accessible to company employees)

Our definition of a social CEO extends beyond social networks because we recognize that social media usage and confidence vary across the world. Corporate websites are experiencing a renaissance as they are often the home for company branded content and CEO perspectives.

We also researched the online activities of top women business leaders using Fortune's 2014 Most Powerful Women (MPW) in Business global 50 rankings. Social media is an important tool for women in business to get their voices heard. We replicated the CEO methodology from above for MPWs. While many of the women on the MPW list are CEOs, some hold other leadership positions.

## Sites and the platforms we audited, along with the criteria we used to determine whether a CEO is social:

## SITE OR PLATFORM

#### CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL MEDIA INCLUSION



Company website

CEO posts messages (e.g., letters, quotes), pictures, or video on the homepage, "about us" page, careers page, diversity/inclusion and sustainability/corporate social responsibility pages.\*



CEO appears in a video uploaded by company on the firm's corporate YouTube channel or the regional equivalent of YouTube.



Profile is verified by Facebook and marked with official blue badge. If profile is not officially verified, page must include CEO's picture and accurate biographical information. Posts must realistically be those of the CEO. Profile page is visible either through Google search or to those who have a Facebook account.



Profile is verified by Twitter and marked with official blue badge. If profile is not officially verified, it must have the CEO's picture and at least one Tweet from after the CEO assumed office. Tweets and accounts followed must realistically be those of the CEO.



Profile is visible through Google search or to those with Basic (non-paying) LinkedIn accounts. Profile contains accurate information and current position at the company. Also included CEOs designated by LinkedIn as an "Influencer."



Profile must have CEO's picture and title. Posts and accounts followed must realistically be those of the CEO.



External blog must be written under CEO's name. No CEO blogs have been found since we started the audit in 2010.

\*In past waves of **Socializing Your CEO**, diversity/inclusion and sustainability/corporate social responsibility pages were not audited.

^We searched regional equivalents of these platforms using the same criteria.

## **Key Social Stats**



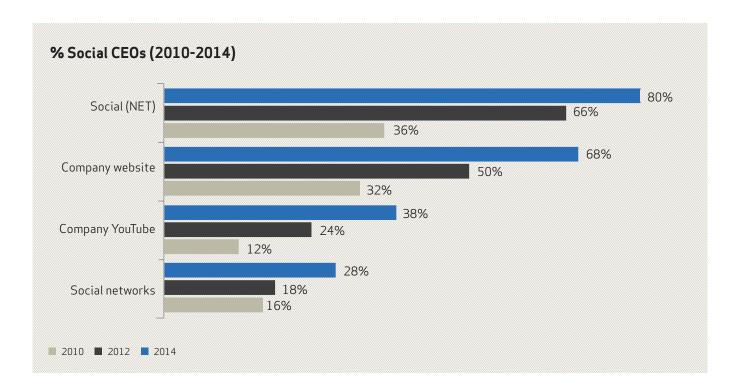
<sup>&</sup>quot;Social media is a particularly valuable platform because it allows for two-way conversations and, with that, engagement on a substantive level that is unprecedented. Not only can I share my message, but I can also listen to and solicit feedback and ideas — from employees, clients, the general public or the media."

<sup>-</sup> ANDY POLANSKY, CEO, WEBER SHANDWICK, FORBES, COM, AUGUST 14, 2013

## CEO Sociability: from Marginal to Mainstream

### CEO Sociability has Reached a Record High

Our 2014 audit found that 80% of CEOs from the world's top companies are social, either through their company website (68%), company YouTube channel (38%) or a social network (28%). CEO online engagement has surged by 122% since our first **Socializing Your CEO** study in 2010, when only 36% of CEOs were social. Use of the company website, YouTube and social networks all contributed to 2014's increase in CEO sociability.



The growth in sociability suggests that companies and their executives recognize the importance of online engagement in today's digital world. Communicating online is the norm for today's CEOs rather than the practice of a select few.

"CEOs have the chance to strengthen the standing of their companies and lead their industries by taking an active and visible role in company-branded content. The proliferation of sources, the unpredictability of news cycles and the explosion of new, highly visual media formats can be a challenge to any company, but it's also a massive opportunity."

— CHRIS PERRY, PRESIDENT, DIGITAL, WEBER SHANDWICK

## Some companies favor executive sociability and are actively seeking out social savvy leaders.

In 2013, UK fashion brand Lyle & Scott used social media to recruit a new CEO. Lyle & Scott's #nextgreatleader campaign was led by Patrick Tame, CEO of executive recruiter Beringer Tame. Each candidate for the CEO position was asked to produce a Vine video and Pinterest board for the brand, as well as a resume that excluded education and work experience. According to Tame, "[the owner of Lyle & Scott] wants a modern tech-aware retail CEO who is social media literate. By conducting the search using social media, we automatically select out the dinosaurs."

"Can You Find a CEO on Social Media? Lyle & Scott Hopes So," Econsultancy



### The Company Website Continues to Drive the Surge in CEO Sociability

The company website is once again the top destination for CEO communications with nearly seven in 10 CEOs (68%) having a presence that includes more than just their name or standard biography page. The company website is a vehicle for content and the gateway to reputation; it is often the first stop for people looking to learn more about a company, allowing CEOs to share their communications directly with stakeholders without having to go through another party. The rise in the use of company website reflects the trend of companies becoming self-publishers of news and information.

In our research, CEO communications take a variety of forms on company websites, including quotes, photos, videos and speech transcripts. The "about us" page is the most popular place for CEO presence on the company website. The advantage of making the CEO visible here is that this area of the website is typically the first place people go to learn more about a company, and the CEO would therefore be one of the first things they see while exploring the website. Being visible on the company website is one of the most important

engagement activities a CEO can do. Weber Shandwick's **CEO Reputation Premium** research found 68% of global executives think it's important for CEOs to have a presence on the company website, ranking just below speaking at industry conferences and being accessible to the media.

Some CEOs in our audit are featured on the company homepage along with their picture and link to find out more information about them. One company in our audit features a picture of the CEO on the homepage and links to his "Point of View" on an issue related to his company's business. Another shows a picture of the CEO on the homepage and links it to a special CEO page with speeches and interviews categorized by year.

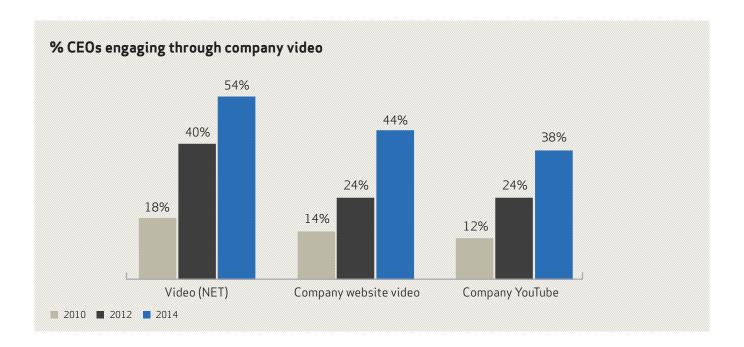
For the 2014 audit, we added diversity/inclusion and sustainability/corporate social responsibility pages to our search. Because CEOs found on these pages were also found on other areas of the website, the new additions did not contribute to the growth in company website use and overall CEO sociability.

Weber Shandwick's content marketing offering — Mediaco — provides a holistic approach for brands and their leaders to optimize content to engage an audience with desired, measurable impact on business outcomes. From defining a narrative at the intersection of audience interests and business priorities, to establishing a custom content production and distribution strategy, Mediaco allows companies to be masters of their brand and leadership stories. mediaco.webershandwick.com

### Corporate Video is Fast Becoming a CEO Standard

Video conveys a clear message, shows emotion and is sharable. It sets the company up to be a next-generation visual storyteller. In our research, CEO corporate video usage, either on the company website or company YouTube channel, is three times as high as it was in 2010. Over half of the CEOs in our audit (54%) now appear in company video. Company website video was used by CEOs more than YouTube in 2014 (44% vs. 38%, respectively).

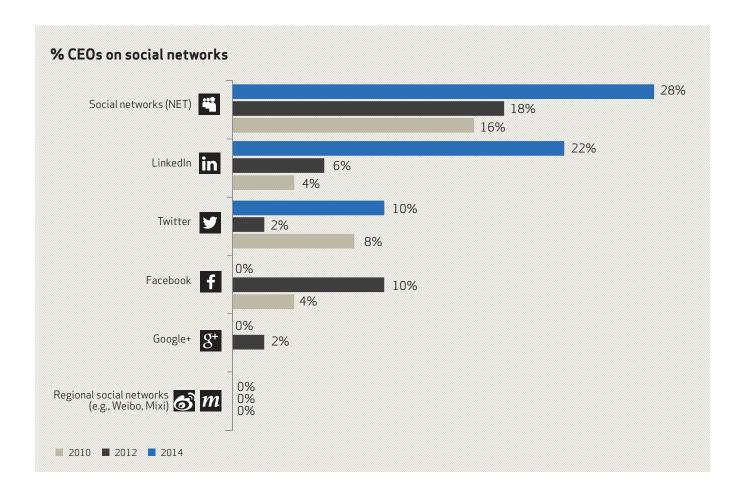
Recent CEO YouTube videos we found contained a variety of content. Many videos were repurposed clips of CEOs at investor meetings or reporting on quarterly financial results and at industry-related events. Some videos were directed at customers. One CEO appears in a series of videos to address consumer questions regarding a recent company crisis.



#### 2014: A Record Year for Social Networks

CEOs on social networks have several advantages over their peers who have yet to join. Weber Shandwick's **The Social CEO: Executives Tell All** found that there are many benefits to CEOs participating in social media, including that social media is a good way to share information, has a positive impact on company reputation and demonstrates company innovation. More CEOs are reaping these benefits than ever before. After two years of little growth, the proportion of CEOs in our audit with a social network account jumped to 28% from below 20% in past years. This level is on par with other research on CEO use of social networks. A 2014 report from CEO.com and Domo found that 32% of Fortune 500 CEOs have a presence on a social network.

The rate of CEOs using LinkedIn nearly quadrupled since 2012, making LinkedIn the most popular social network for top executives in 2014. The CEO.com and Domo report says that LinkedIn is the "entry network" of choice among CEOs, and that of Fortune 500 CEOs with only one social network, 73% were on LinkedIn. Three CEOs in our audit are LinkedIn Influencers. According to LinkedIn, Influencers post content on a variety of topics (leadership, management, how to succeed, etc.) for the purpose of creating professional conversation. The Influencers in our audit each have several posts.



Twitter also contributed to the growth in social network use. After hitting a low in 2012, CEO Twitter use climbed up to 10%. This growth can be attributed to a few CEOs recently joining Twitter (with verified accounts) and the introduction of several CEO Tweeters to the Fortune 50 list. The dip in Twitter usage by CEOs from 2010 to 2012 may have been caused by several high profile CEO slip-ups on Twitter that scared non-users away altogether. It now appears that CEOs are more confident about how to use Twitter without causing alarm and reputational harm.

Our audit did not turn up any CEO accounts on Facebook, Google+, or networks specific to certain regions, such as Weibo in China and Mixi in Japan. As a result, CEO Facebook use fell from 10% to 0%. This does not necessarily mean that CEOs are leaving Facebook. Other factors have impacted decline in CEO use of Facebook:

- One CEO who had a Facebook profile in 2012 was not on the 2014 Fortune list
- Some profiles from 2012 may not have been legitimate and were subsequently taken down

The 2014 search also turned up fake CEO accounts, many of which contained inaccurate or no information about the CEO. We first noted the prevalence of fake social network accounts in 2012 and these profiles continued to pose problems in 2014. Some searches for CEOs turn up multiple accounts all claiming to be the same CEO. These profiles pose a reputational risk because stakeholders may take false information about a company and its leadership as truth.

#### **CEO Tweets**

What do CEOs Tweet about? A separate Weber Shandwick audit found that CEOs are most likely to Tweet links to blogs, articles, websites or photos, followed by Tweets about company news and personal information. The same audit found that CEO Tweets are most often directed at other people and companies versus their own employees or customers.

## How Social are Fortune's 2014 Most Powerful Women in Business?

76% of the women in our MPW audit are social, putting them just behind the Fortune Global 50 CEOs in terms of sociability (80%). MPWs are more likely to be on their company website (60%) than on YouTube (40%) and social networks (30%).

#### % Social MPWs







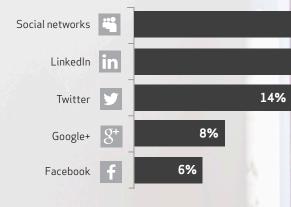
30%

26%



Like the top CEOs, MPWs are most likely to be on LinkedIn (26%) and Twitter (14%) with respect to social networks. Four of the women on LinkedIn are LinkedIn influencers and each has more than one post. The MPWs differ from the CEOs in our audit by having profiles on Google+ and Facebook.

#### % MPWs on social networks



"For the purposes of building business through thought leadership, social media has the potential to open wide the gates of access. By default and tradition, men alone have narrated business. But, that story has grown stale. 'Going social' has huge potential for helping women leaders elevate their own voices, add fresh thinking to important conversations, and build trusted community with an impact that makes a world of business difference."

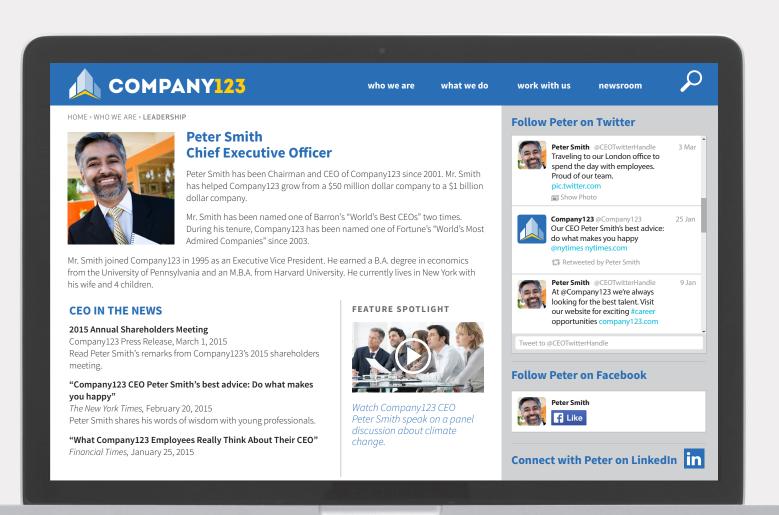
— ANDREA LEARNED, THOUGHT LEADERSHIP STRATEGIST AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS WRITER, AS APPEARS ON THE HUFFINGTON POST, SEPTEMBER 19, 2014

## Socializing Your Bio

The CEO's biography or profile on the company website is often the first piece of content that stakeholders come across when searching for information on executives. One-dimensional biographies describing the CEO's experience are things of the past. The bio of tomorrow's most engaged CEOs will be ones curated with rich content, whether it be social media, articles, pictures or video.

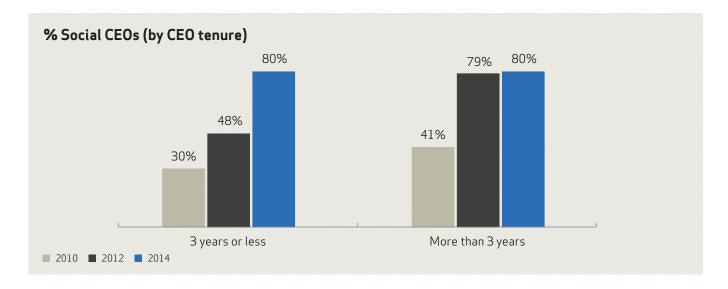
One CEO in our audit has a social media section in his biography on the company website that links to his profiles on LinkedIn and Twitter. Other CEOs in our audit have website bios that link to videos of them and text of speeches. Dynamic profiles such as these make content accessible and bring the company's story to the forefront.

Below is an example of how to enrich a CEO's biography and make it more social. This illustration uses Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as examples, but applies to other social networks as well.



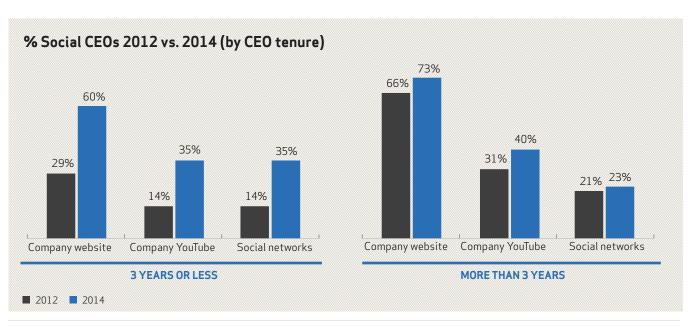
### Social Now Starts on Day One

After several years of lagging behind their more tenured peers in terms of being social, newer CEOs (in office three years or less) are now just as social. While longer-tenured CEOs are just as social as longer-tenured CEOs were two years ago, the rate of sociability among newer CEOs jumped from 48% to 80%. This increase is not a product of age; in our audit, new CEOs were only four years younger on average than their longer-tenured colleagues.



The sociability of newer CEOs is likely to grow, and it is possible that new CEOs may even eclipse longer-tenured CEOs in their use of social. As Leslie Gaines-Ross, Weber Shandwick's chief reputation strategist, explains in her MIT Sloan Management Review article, "Get Social: A Mandate for New CEOs," the first few months of a CEO's tenure are a "honeymoon squeeze," filled with meetings and travel. There is little time in the day to meet the demands of the new job. Social media is a tool that helps CEOs ease the squeeze and establish his or her reputation quickly and reach greater audiences in less time than ever before. Plus, it's just an engaging way of introducing oneself to a wide swath of stakeholders.

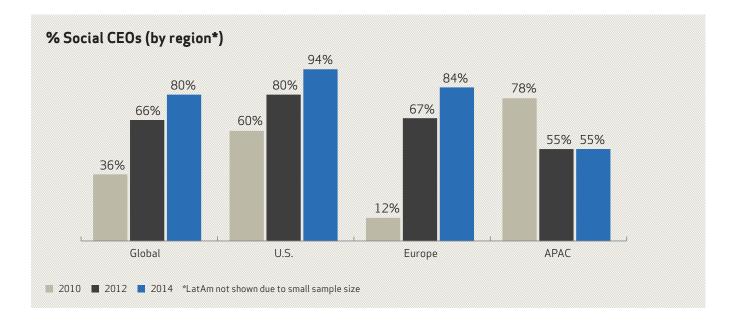
Newer CEOs doubled their use of the company website and more than doubled their adoption of YouTube and social networks since 2012. In fact, newer CEOs now lead longer-tenured CEOs in use of social networks.





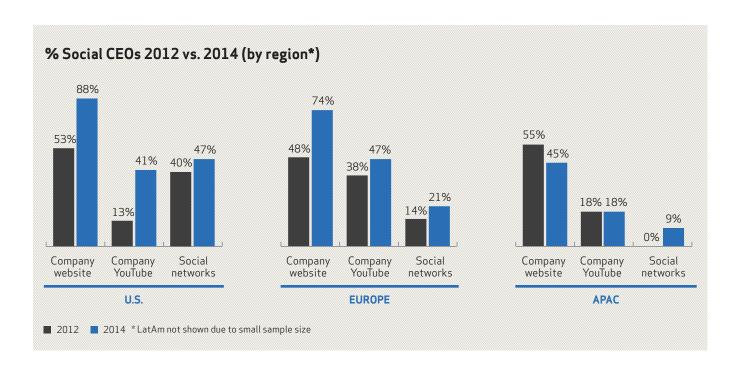
### U.S. CEOs are on the Leading Edge of Social with Europe Not Far Behind

Once again, U.S. CEOs surpass their peers in Europe and APAC in terms of sociability. Nearly all of the U.S. CEOs in the 2014 audit were social (94%). However, European CEOs have made great leaps in sociability over the past few years and are catching up to U.S. CEOs. APAC CEOs are less social than those in the U.S., and Europe and did not experience any growth since 2012.



Since 2012, U.S. and European CEOs increased their engagement through all three components of sociability. While APAC CEOs used social networks the 2014 where they did not at all in 2012, their use of company website decreased and use of company YouTube did not change.

European CEOs are the most likely to appear in company YouTube videos (47%), slightly edging out those from the U.S. (41%). U.S. CEOs have the greatest presence on social networks (47%).



## 9 Tips for CEO Social Engagement

CEOs need to embrace online tools to stay competitive in today's digitally dominated landscape. Our research shows that the leaders of today's top companies are increasingly engaging through online platforms, including the company website, video and social networks. With CEO reputation having a greater value than ever before, it is important to expand the reach and content of CEO communications. Company stakeholders (e.g., customers, the media, partners, employees) increasingly get their information online, which means that social CEOs have an undeniable advantage in reaching their audiences.

Weber Shandwick recommends that companies and their executives adopt the following strategies to optimize their online storytelling to help bolster their own reputations and those of the organizations they run:

- Get social on Day One. CEOs are going social earlier in their tenure compared to years past. If there was ever a time for the CEO to be in the spotlight, it is at the start of his or her tenure when stakeholder appetite for more information about new CEO intentions and expectations is strongest. Consider using an introductory message on the company website's homepage, not only to alert the public of a management change, but to give your CEO a company face and voice from Day One. There is no longer a "learning curve" when it comes to socializing the CEO.
- **Socialize the bench.** Sociability starts at the bench level. As we see from assessing the sociability of the most powerful women in business, sociability begins before taking the top job. Those executives who have the social know-how when they step up to CEO will have an advantage over the competition and may even have brighter career prospects.
- Choose platforms wisely. Find the right social vehicle for an unsocial CEO. CEO sociability is inevitable, so he or she needs to embrace it in some form. Effective online engagement doesn't mean using every platform. Know your target audience. Some markets may be sensitive to photos and video, in which case written messages would be a more effective way for CEOs to communicate. Certain sites may be better for short messages, while others may be more appropriate for posting long messages or videos. As Wall Street Journal reporter Jack Marshall Tweeted, "If your message is 10 tweets or longer, Twitter might not be the best venue for said message."



- 4 **Listen closely.** For those CEOs still hesitant to embrace social media, listening and watching should be the first step. Monitoring the online conversation is a way to gather data on stakeholders and gauge what is being said about your company. Consider applying a "rule of 5" as part of the social listening plan; follow five other people (e.g., colleagues, other CEOs in your industry, CEOs from other industries) and five other types of accounts (e.g., competitor companies, trade publications). This allows CEOs to understand how others use social media, as well as get a sense of what is happening online in small quantities without facing information overload. Listening may be the first step for CEOs to gain enough social confidence to jump into the conversation.
- Embrace a "media company mindset." Take hold of the trend in narrating your company story and use the company website as a media platform to publish content. Feature the CEO regularly, even if it is just recycled footage from a speaking engagement or a snippet from a Town Hall Meeting.
- Socialize the CEO's biography. The CEO's biography or profile on the company website is a central place to show off your CEO's assets. Consider moving beyond the standard bio. If your CEO has social networks, link to these profiles from the CEO's bio. Grouping content that includes the CEO (e.g., videos, speeches) in one place makes information more accessible to stakeholders and helps to broaden the reach of executive messaging. Do the same for the executive team.
- **Leverage the CEO's sociability for media relations.** When journalists inquire about a CEO for an interview, provide his or her social content as introduction.
- **Don't overlook the importance of the CEO's internal engagement.** Employees are today's company spokespeople and will share CEO communications. If your company has an intranet, consider showcasing your CEO communications there for all employees to see. For some companies, CEO emails to employees or communication through the intranet may be just enough.
- **9 Consult the board and legal team.** Make sure the board and legal team are aware of the CEO's social media engagement so that there aren't any surprises and that participation follows protocol. If your CEO is hesitant about getting started in social media, review social posts with a company lawyer until the CEO feels comfortable.

"Savvy leaders make the most of digital technology to galvanize their organization around a shared understanding of the business. When leaders use social media to become aware of the conversations within their organizations and can identify those that generate the most energy or emotion, they can allocate their attention and their interventions with greater impact. When they are able to see and tap into social networks, leaders will be able to interact with their organization the way a symphony conductor does — in real time with nuanced or direct intervention depending on what's needed."

"HOW SMART CEOS USE SOCIAL TOOLS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE," HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, MARCH 9, 2015

For more information about Socializing Your CEO III: From Marginal to Mainstream, please contact:

#### Leslie Gaines-Ross

Chief Reputation Strategist Weber Shandwick Igaines-ross@webershandwick.com

#### **Chris Perry**

President, Digital Weber Shandwick cperry@webershandwick.com

#### Adam Clyne

Head of Digital, EMEA Weber Shandwick aclyne@webershandwick.com

#### Jon Wade

Head of Digital Practice, Asia Pacific Weber Shandwick jwade@webershandwick.com

#### **Everton Schultz**

Digital Director, Latin America Weber Shandwick eschultz@webershandwick.com

#### Jason Wellcome

Head of Mediaco Weber Shandwick jwellcome@webershandwick.com

#### Ian Cohen

Executive Producer Weber Shandwick icohen@webershandwick.com



/WeberShandwick



@WeberShandwick



/WeberShandwick



/Company/Weber-Shandwick



/WeberShandwickGlobal



+WeberShandwick



#### Social CEO Resources:

Socializing Your CEO II, Weber Shandwick

The CEO Reputation Premium: Gaining Advantage in the Engagement Era, Weber Shandwick and KRC Research

The Social CEO: Executives Tell All, Weber Shandwick and KRC Research

Get Social: A Mandate for New CEOs (MIT Sloan Management Review), Leslie Gaines-Ross, Chief Reputation Strategist, Weber Shandwick

2014 Social CEO Report, Domo and CEO.com

2014 Global Social CEO Survey, BRANDfog

"Bullish on digital: McKinsey Global Survey results," McKinsey

"Can you find a CEO on social media? Lyle & Scott hopes so," Econsultancy

"Too Busy to Tweet? Only seven FTSE 100 CEOs are active on Twitter — and none get close to Richard Branson for social power," Information Age
Executive Playbook: 12 Steps to Become a Social Leader, LinkedIn