



The Chief Communications Officer

Summary and findings among
the Fortune 500

December 2025



About the Survey

Korn Ferry's Global Corporate Affairs practice invited the senior-most communications executives at Fortune 500 companies to take an online survey on organizational structure and reward practices for Chief Communications Officers. Responses were collected in August and September 2025 from 78 companies across a wide range of industries, including industrials, financial services, consumer, healthcare, technology, energy/utilities, transportation/logistics, media/entertainment, life sciences, advertising/marketing, and manufacturing.

This is the latest such survey by Korn Ferry – the most recent report was published in 2023. Where appropriate, responses from the latest survey were compared to the earlier benchmarks.

Note: Due to the rounding of survey results, some percentages may not total 100%.



Executive Summary

Korn Ferry's 2025 Chief Communications Officer (CCO) survey underscores the rising influence of CCOs as indispensable advisors to CEOs and Boards. Communications is no longer a support function—it is increasingly positioned at the center of corporate strategy. There has been a notable increase in CCOs reporting directly to CEOs, reflecting the elevation of the role as a driver of reputation, engagement, and enterprise value.

CCOs today command significant resources, with the majority of respondents noting their budgets exceed \$5 million. Nearly half report total compensation in the seven-figure range, and about one in seven earn \$2 million or more. The most commonly reported total compensation range was between \$1 million and \$1.25 million. This level of investment signals the premium organizations place on communications leadership in a high-stakes environment.

The survey also highlights a communications landscape in transition. Nearly all respondents rely on external agencies and AI tools, pointing to a technology-driven future. Yet almost one-third have not formalized their approach to AI integration—revealing both the urgency and opportunity for CCOs to define how emerging technologies reshape the craft of communications.

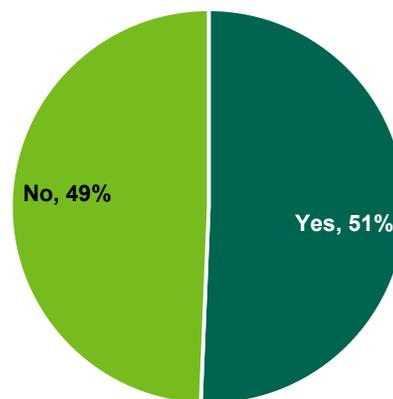


Organizational Structure

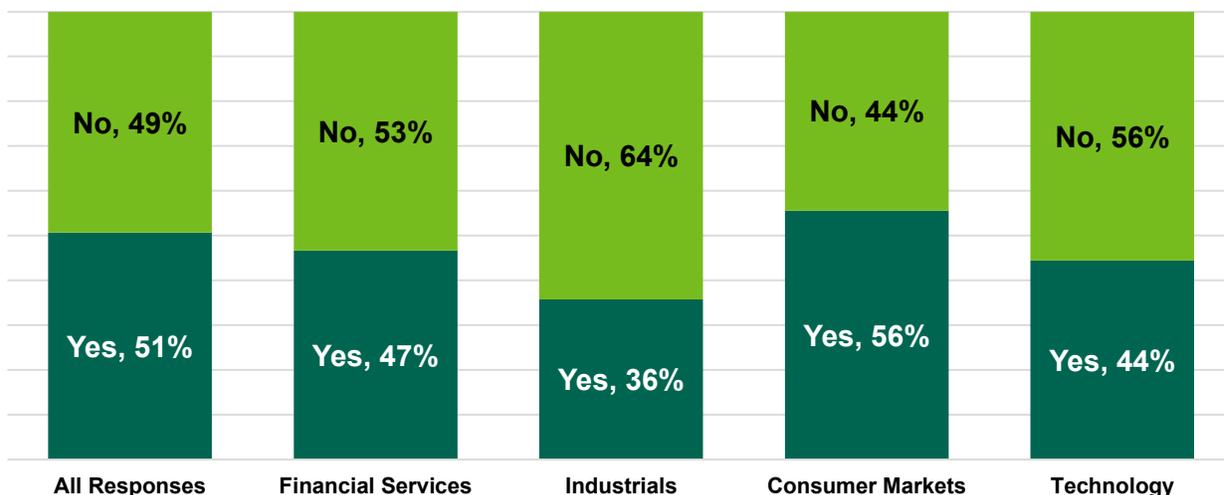
CCOs are gaining influence, though it differs across sectors.

51% of participants reported they were on their company's Executive Committee or comparable senior leadership team; 49% reported they were not. Notably, there was variation between industries, with 56% of Consumer Markets communications heads self-reporting as executive committee members while only 36% of Industrials communications heads noted the same.

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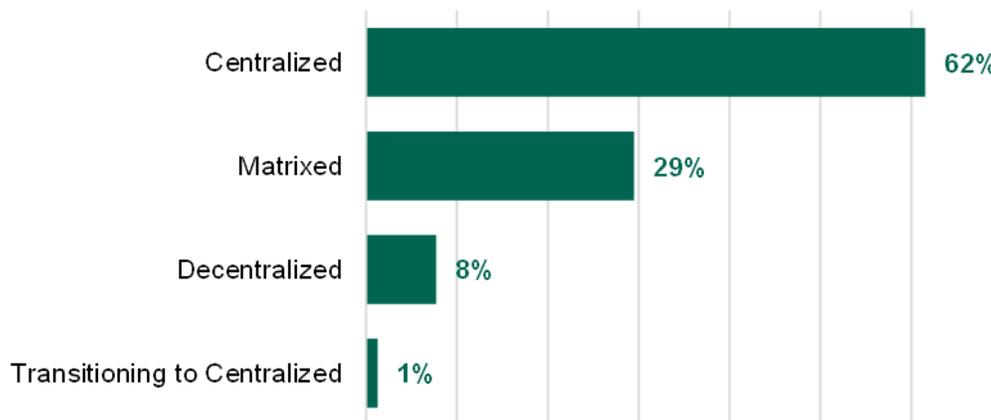


Organizational Structure

Most CCOs lead centralized teams spanning Corporate, Executive, and Internal Communications, plus Crisis/Issues Management, Media Relations and Social and Digital Media.

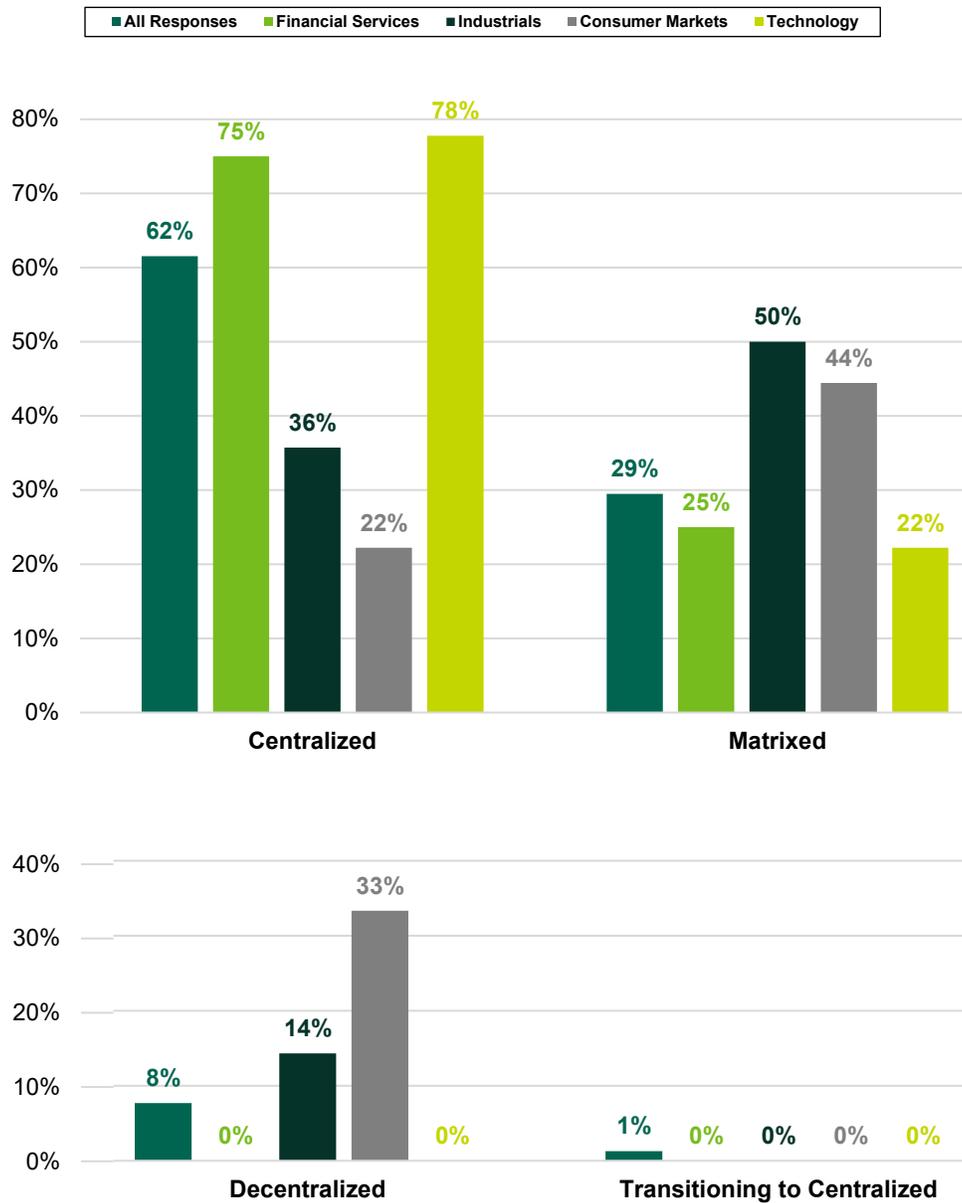
62% of participants reported working in a centralized organization structure, whereas only 8% reported working in a decentralized structure. 29% reported working in a matrixed organizational structure. Respondents from the Financial Services and Technology sectors were more likely to report working in a centralized organization structure, whereas respondents from the Industrials and Consumer Markets sectors were more likely to report working in a matrixed organizational structure. A third of Consumer Markets respondents reported working in a decentralized organizational structure, more than all other sectors combined.

Which of the following best describes the organizational structure for communications at your company?



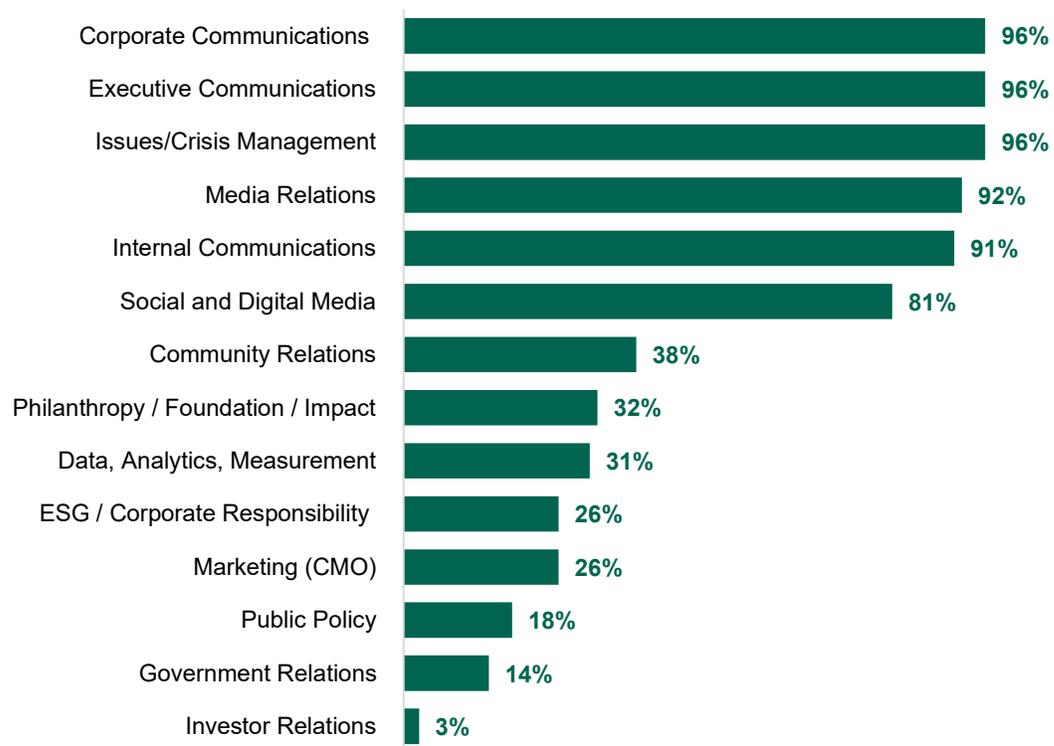


Which of the following best describes the organizational structure for communications at your company?





What functions or responsibilities report to you?



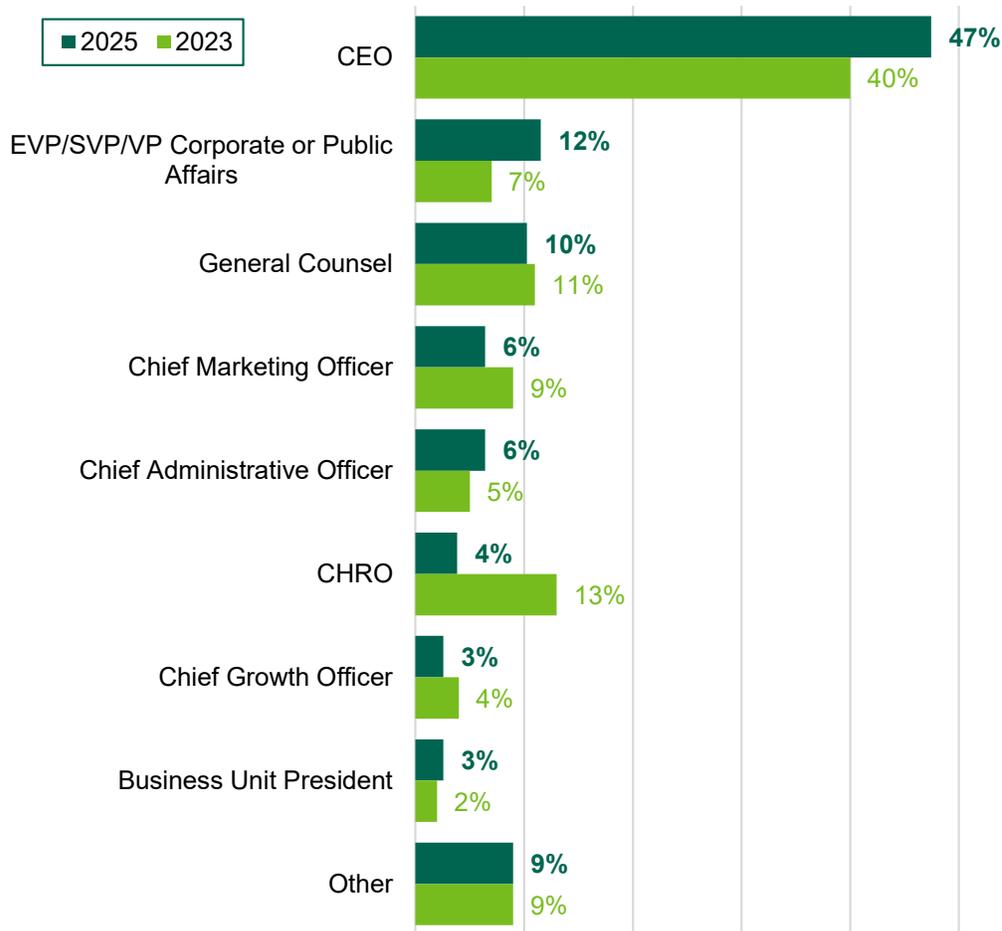


Communications Team Structure and Budget

CCOs Gain Direct Access to CEOs—Backed by \$5M+ Budgets.

Compared to 2023 levels, CCOs were more likely to report to a CEO or EVP of Corporate Affairs, and less likely to report to a CHRO or CMO.

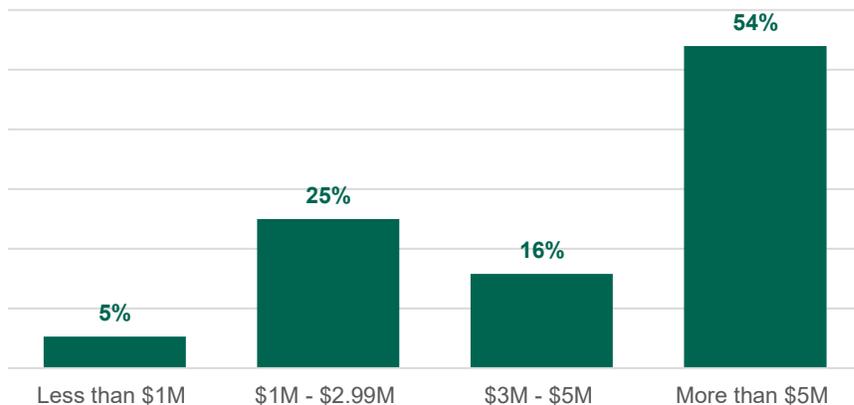
To whom do you report? (Summarized)





The majority (54%) of respondents reported a communications function budget of over \$5 million, while only 5% reported a budget of less than \$1 million.

What is your communications function's total annual budget?



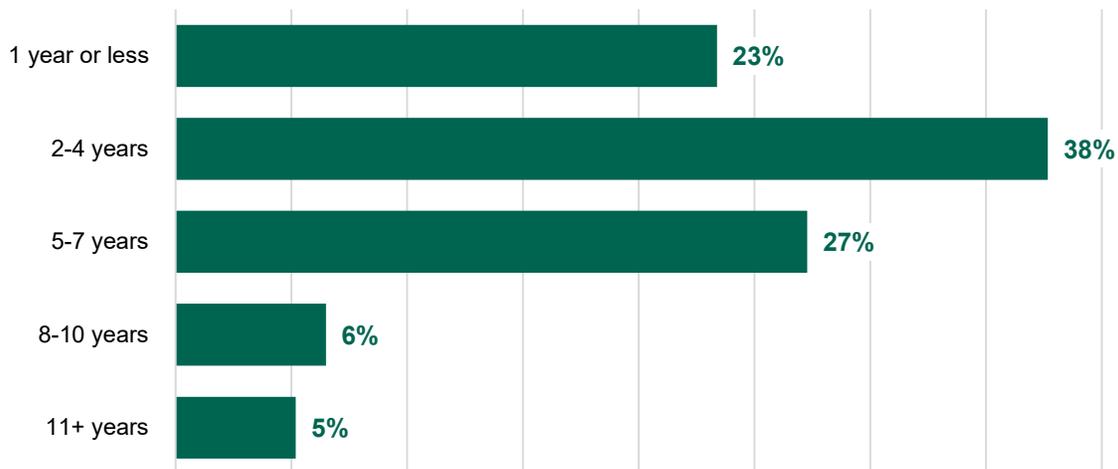


Tenure and Compensation

CCOs have been in their positions longer, and salaries are rising.

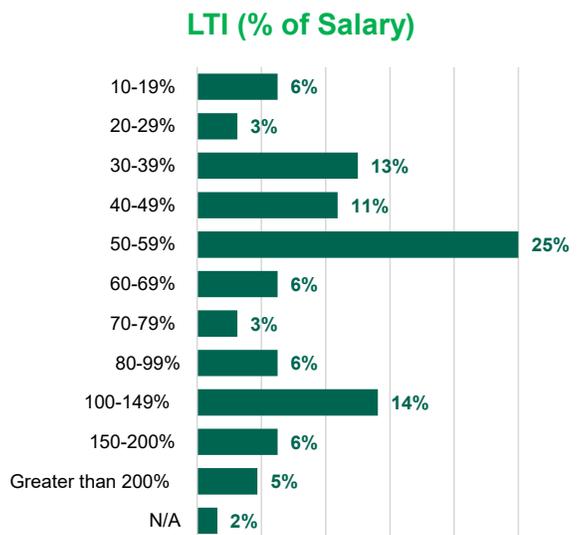
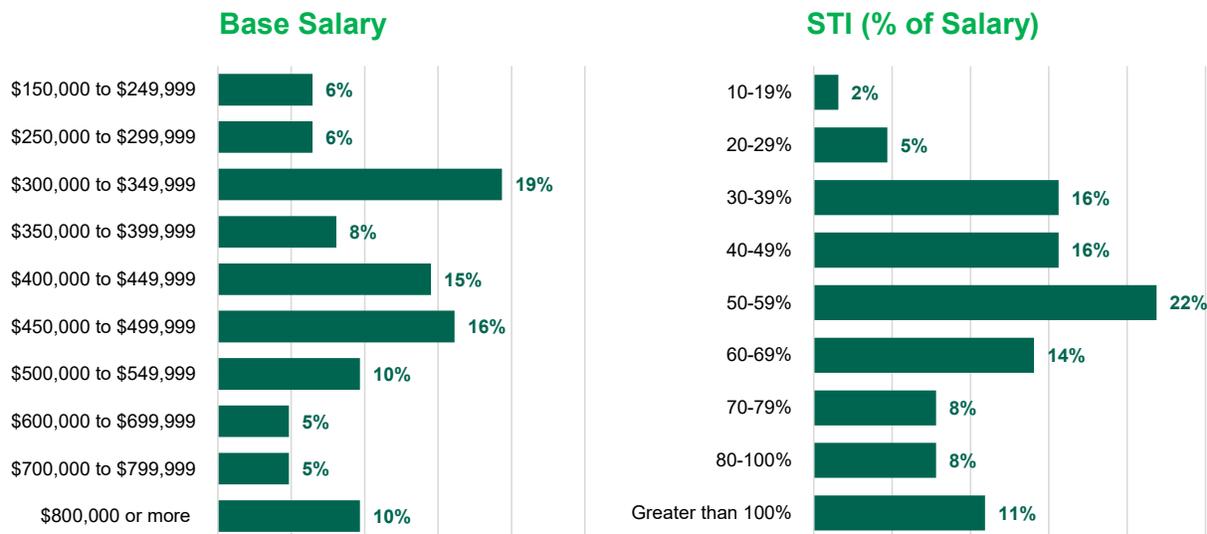
A plurality of respondents have been in their current position for 2-4 years (38%), while in 2023 a plurality had been in their position for 1-3 years (44%). The second most-selected tenure this year, 5-7 years (27%), tracks to the second most-selected tenure of 2023 at 4-6 years (23%).

How long have you been in your current position?





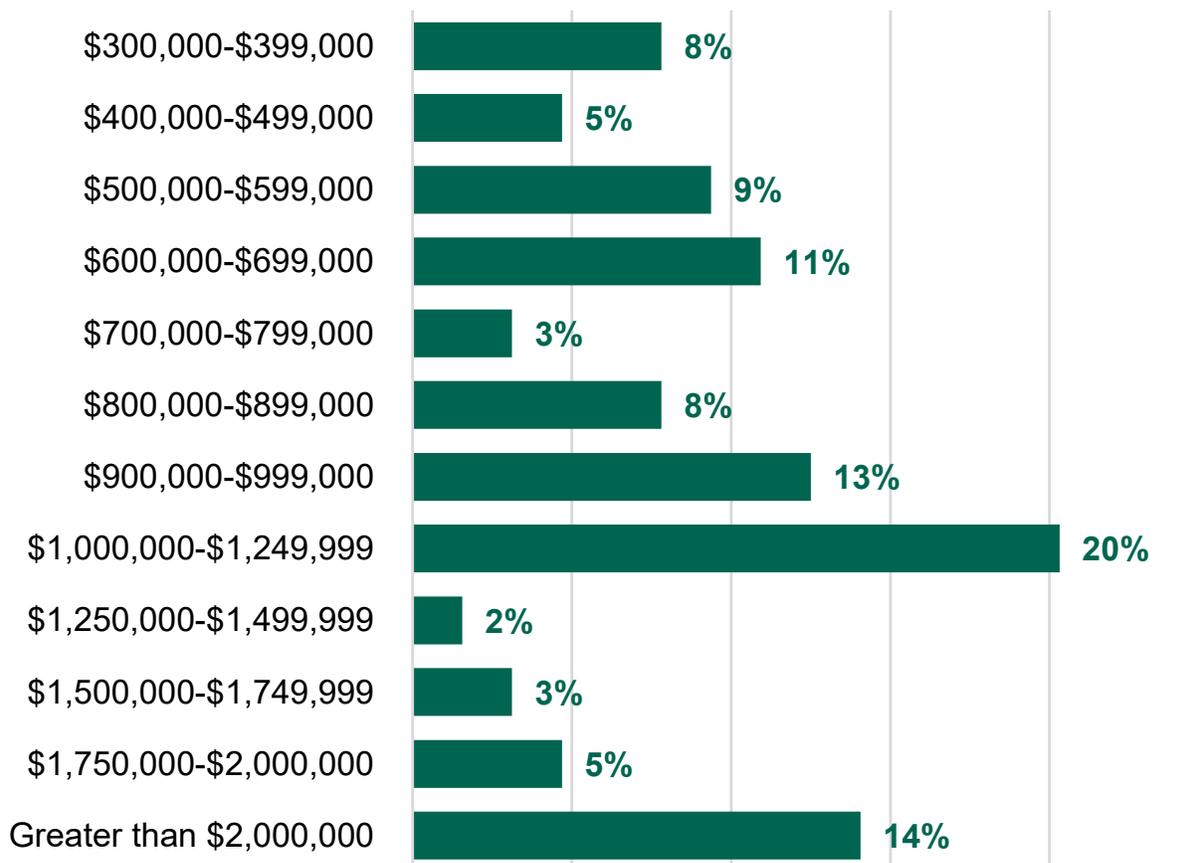
In 2025, respondents' median salary is between \$400,000 and \$450,000, up from 2023, when the median salary was between \$350,000-\$400,000.





The median total target compensation is between \$900,000 and \$1 million; the most common response was between \$1 million - \$1.25 million.

Total Comp. (Salary + STI + LTI)



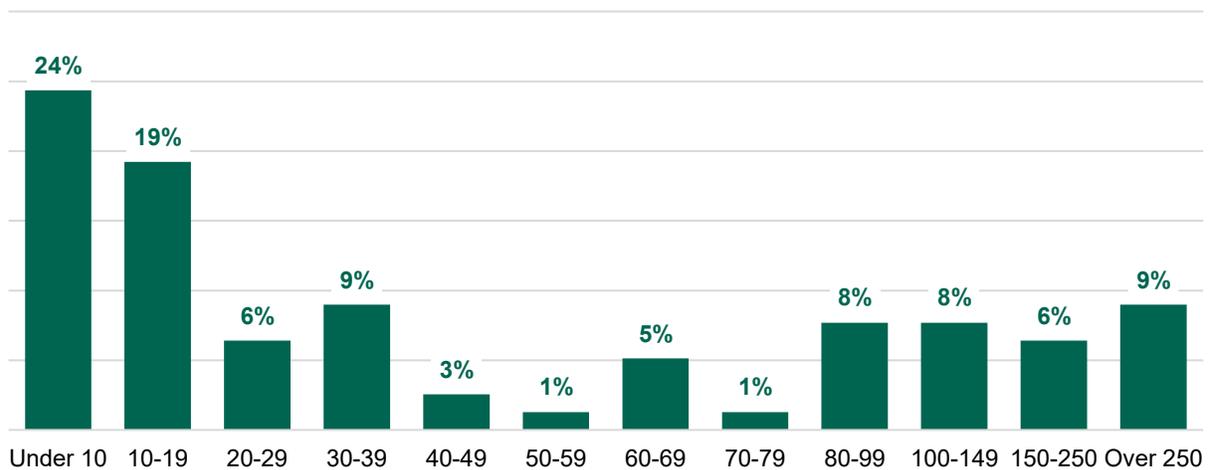


Communications Team Structure

Communications team size varies, with media relations once again the most in-demand skill when hiring.

Responses show wide variation in team size – 24% of respondents had teams of under 10 people, and 9% of respondents had teams of over 250 people. Approximately half of respondents had teams of 30 people or more.

What is the approximate size of your direct team?



Media relations, issues and crisis management, executive communications, and internal communications remain the most in-demand skills when hiring, consistent with 2023. Additionally, social and digital media has risen to be the second-most in-demand skill in 2025, with 40% of respondents now selecting it as a priority. By contrast, only 16% of respondents marked financial communications as a skill they look for when hiring (down from 29% in 2023), and only 3% marked ESG/Corporate Responsibility (down from 19% in 2023).

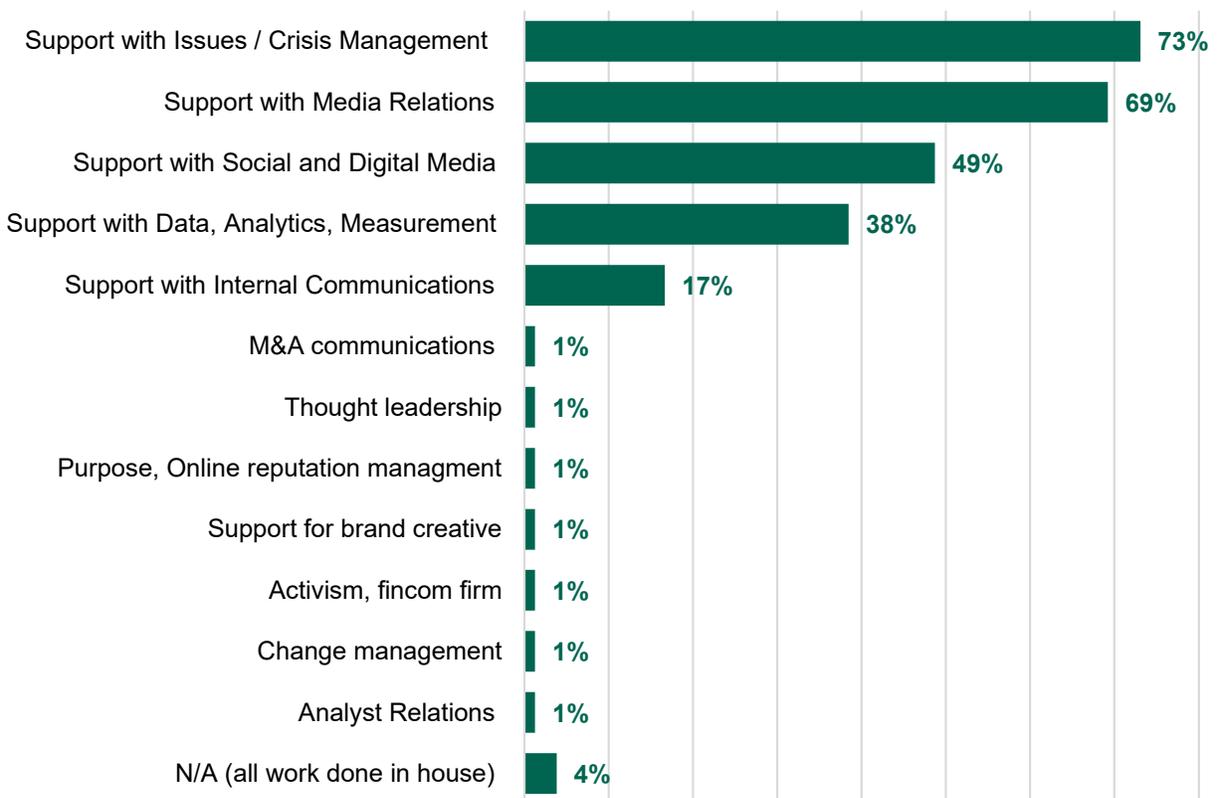


Communications Agencies and AI

Agencies and AI are critical to the CCO toolkit.

A majority of respondents (96%) reported utilizing external communication agencies, most commonly for support with issues / crisis management (73%), media relations (69%), social and digital media (49%), data, analytics, and measurement (38%), and internal communications (17%).

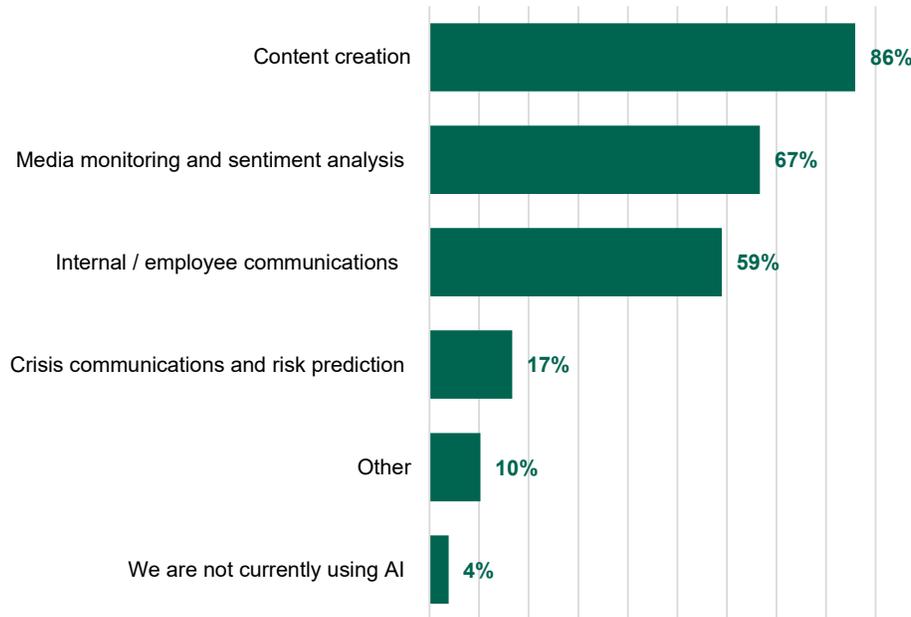
How do you utilize communications agencies?



96% of respondents indicated they are utilizing AI, most commonly for content creation (86%), media monitoring and sentiment analysis (67%), and internal / employee communications (59%).

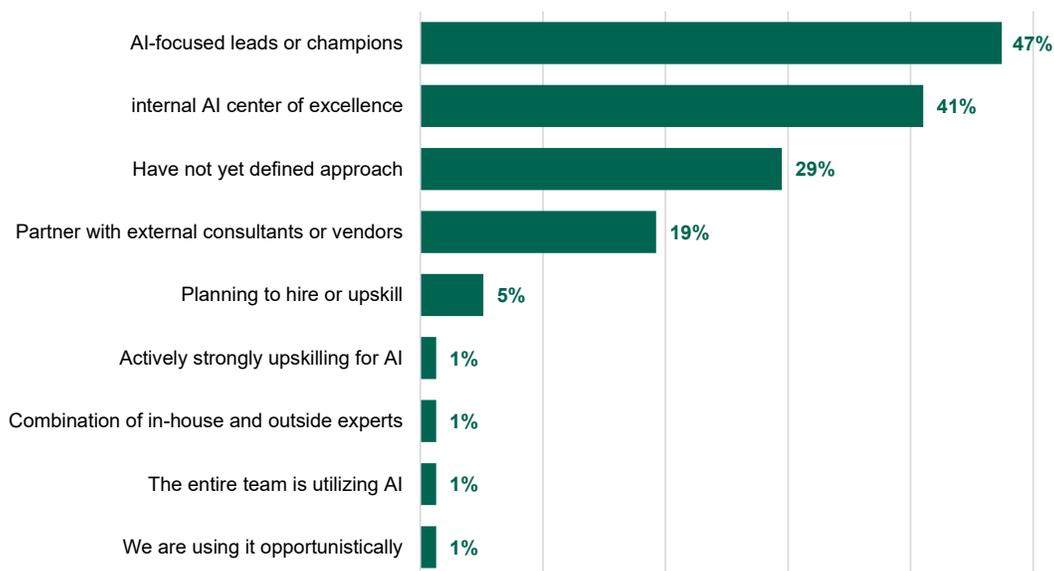


In what areas of your communications strategy are you currently leveraging AI tools?



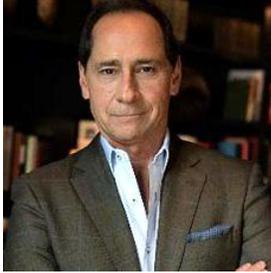
29% of respondents have not yet defined their approach to how their team supports AI-driven communication efforts. Of those who have, the most common approaches include having AI-focused leads or champions (47%) or an internal AI center of excellence (41%).

How is your team currently supporting or resourcing AI-driven communications efforts?





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Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We help clients synchronize strategy and talent to drive superior performance. We work with organizations to design their structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people to bring their strategy to life, and we advise them on how to reward, develop, and motivate their people.