

From Crisis to Opportunity

MANAGING YOUR MESSAGING

LYNN SMITH
MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS



“

Now, because audiences can be so polarized, when you send out a message, you've really got to think about not only 'How can this be interpreted?' but also 'How can this be misinterpreted?'

”

CMO TODAY

The Revenge of the Publicists: How Comms Execs Stormed the C-Suite

No longer at the margins writing press releases, communications chiefs are making millions as they drive product strategy and report directly to their CEOs

By [Katie Deighton](#)

June 8, 2026 7:00 am ET

[Listen](#) (2 min)

Chief communications officers are finding themselves acting less as media coverage commanders and more as consiglieres to CEOs. THOMAS R. LECHLEITER/WSJ AND ISTOCK

A CRISIS
IS NOT
SOMETHING YOU
SURVIVE.

3:40



< chrisk_mcd



Chris Kempczinski

249
posts

124K
followers

18
following

Proud dad, husband and @dukeuniversity alum | Chairman and CEO of @mcdonaldscorp



Followed by lynnsmithtv

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Message



“

By the numbers:

Reach of 5.8 billion across all platforms

Generated higher-than-expected early sales for the Big Arch burger

Boosted the executive's social media following by 30%.

”

Mar 12, 2026 - Business

How McDonald's CEO's viral burger video turned memes into money



Eleanor Hawkins



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Illustration: Sarah Grillo/Axios

A video of McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski awkwardly eating a burger went viral and united the internet for a few days.



US news

🕒 This article is more than 2 years old

Let them eat Flakes: Kellogg's CEO says poor families should consider 'cereal for dinner'

Multimillionaire Gary Pilnick was excoriated on the internet, especially as cereal prices have risen 28% over the last four years

Ramon Antonio Vargas

Tue 27 Feb 2024 16.13 GMT

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PILNICK

WK KELLOGG
Chair & CEO

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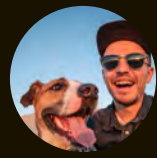
Venezuela earthquakes: 'intensive' search for survivors as death toll rises to 188 - as it happened



Reflecting pool was cut with 'sharp knife or razor', National Park Service says



Scenes of destruction after deadly earthquakes in Venezuela - visual guide



Username01 @username01 • 2yrs ago



This fool is making 4m bucks a year, Do you think he's feeding his kids cereal for dinner?



Username01 @username01 • 2yrs ago



Eat the rich instead



Username01 @username01 • 2yrs ago



a \$10 family-size box of cereal along with a \$3 carton of milk would cost about the same as frozen lasagne meant to feed the same amount of people for dinner.



Username01 @username01 • 2yrs ago



What the hell kind of dystopian hellscape is this? Give the peasant cereal for dinner!"

BUSINESS • EARNINGS

WK Kellogg Cuts Outlook Over Tariffs, Softening Sales

The cereal maker now forecasts sales to decline 2% to 3% for the year instead of 1%, as previously projected

By Dean Seal

Updated May 6, 2025 12:10 pm ET

  Aa  Listen (1 min) 



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WORDS

ACT NOW FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

A - ACKNOWLEDGE

C - COMMUNICATE

T - TAKE ACTION/RESPONSIBILITY

NOW - COMMUNICATE NOW WHAT



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ACT NOW STATEMENT

"I made a comment this week about families eating cereal for dinner to save money, and it didn't land the way I intended. For a lot of people stretching every dollar right now, it came across as out of touch with how hard that pressure really is. That's on me.

What I was trying to say got lost, so let me be direct instead. Families are making impossible choices at the grocery store, and the last thing they need is to be told their dinner table is a budgeting tip.

Here's what we're doing to make things right. [**Concrete action:** the real commitment, a price hold on staples, an expanded value line, a hunger-relief partnership, whatever is true and you can stand behind.]

I'll have more to share on that in the coming weeks. For now, our mission remains the same, We bring our best to everyone, every day through our trusted food and brands.

4 TYPES OF ENERGY

HIGH + TRIGGERED
(DIFFUSE)





HIGH AND TRIGGERED

Scenario

An internal memo about a 5 day a week return -to -office leaks before it is announced, and employees are posting screenshots and venting publicly within the hour.



OPPORTUNITY SIGNAL

Diffuse

Message:

A: You saw this before we were ready to explain it, and I understand why it landed the way it did."

C: "Here is what is true, here is what is not, and here is the part that got lost before it reached you."

T: "This one is on us. We should have brought it to you directly first, and here is what we are changing about how these decisions get shared."

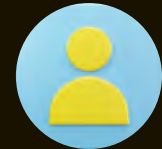
NOW: "You will hear the full picture from me by [day], not from a screenshot. That is my commitment."

4 TYPES OF ENERGY

HIGH + TRIGGERED
(DIFFUSE)

HIGH + ENGAGED
(MATCH)





@no.microphone @no.microphone • a year ago



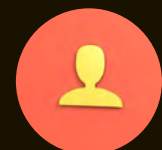
"Could of cooked but instead you microwaved."



@amandakay5024 @amandakay502 • a year ago



"You know, somewhere⁴ in the office, an intern had a 10/10 hilarious idea that corporate rejected."



@genaymaya @genaymaya • a year ago



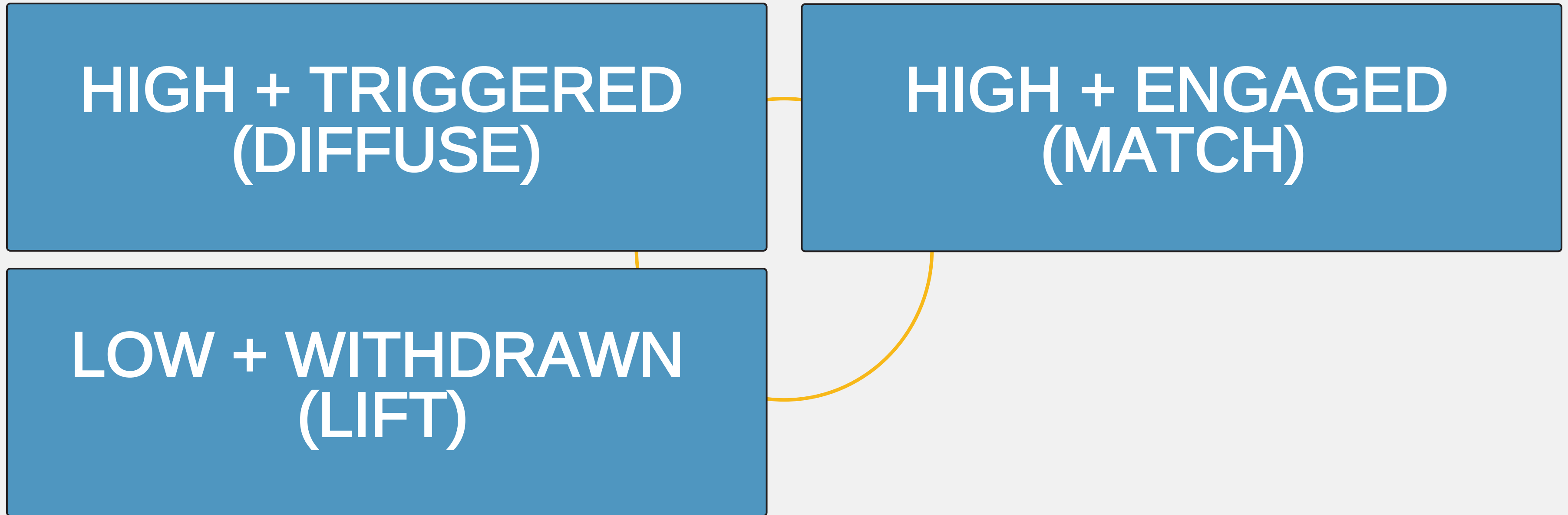
"You guys need a younger, more relevant marketing team; you had the perfect chance to go viral,"

4 TYPES OF ENERGY

HIGH + TRIGGERED
(DIFFUSE)

HIGH + ENGAGED
(MATCH)

LOW + WITHDRAWN
(LIFT)





LOW AND WITHDRAWN

Scenario: Frontline workforce that has stopped reading internal channels entirely because nothing there has felt relevant to their day, so the next important message has nowhere to land.



OPPORTUNITY SIGNAL

Lift

Message:

A: "We know this channel stopped being useful to you, and that's on us, not you."

C: "So we're changing what shows up here. Starting now, this is the place you'll find [the thing that actually affects your day], and nothing that wastes your time."

T: "We're not just changing the message, we're changing how we reach you. We're meeting you where you already are instead of expecting you to come find us."

NOW: "You don't have to take our word for it. Watch this space over the next few weeks, and we'll earn your attention back before we ask anything of you."

4 TYPES OF ENERGY

HIGH + TRIGGERED
(DIFFUSE)

HIGH + ENGAGED
(MATCH)

LOW + WITHDRAWN
(LIFT)

LOW + GUARDED
(EARN)



LOW AND GUARDED

Scenario: after a layoff or a leadership change, the remaining team has gone silent in town halls and survey response rates have dropped, and the absence of pushback is being mistaken for alignment.



OPPORTUNITY SIGNAL

Earn

Message:

A: "I've noticed it's been quiet, and I understand why. I'm not going to ask you to act like the last few months were easy."

C: "So let me be straight with you first. Here's what actually happened, and here's what I can and can't tell you right now."

T: "This one is on us. Here's one thing we got wrong, and here's the specific thing we're changing because of it."

NOW: "You don't have to respond today. When you're ready to talk, I'm listening, and the door is open."



I'm looking for...



Home



My Network



Jobs



Messaging



Notifications



Me



For Business



Sales Nav

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LYNN SMITH

I Was About to Invest
\$50,000. Then I Realized
It Was a Bot

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I Was About to Invest \$50,000. Then I Realized It Was a Bot



Lynn Smith

TEDx Speaker | Named "The CEO Whisperer" by USA Today |
Helping CEOs & leaders become impossible to Replace™ through...



March 5, 2026

I had been following this thought leader for two years.

Comments



23 · 4 comments · 1 repost



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Comment



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Most recent



Shreekala Pandey

· 1st

4mo



Brand Growth strategist | Help Founders L...

This is actually true if you try to act so perfect
while you are not and try to fake it people can
sense it nd they can't build trust among peoples!!

Being imperfect and honest is luxury.

Love · 1 · Reply



Kathy Berardi

· 1st

4mo



PR Strategist & Fractional C-Suite Comm...

🔥!!!!

Love · 1 · Reply



Samantha Jones-Beach

· 2nd

4mo



Meet me for ☕ | Sustainable Revenue | Int...

Amen! AI should be a tool but should never be

FILL

The Trust Tank



FACE IT

DAVID RISHER



INVITE IT



INVITE IT

CRUTCH PHRASES

- ➔ Does that make sense?
- ➔ Right?
- ➔ If you know what I mean?

BRIDGE PHRASES

INVITE IT

CRUTCH PHRASES

- ➔ Does that make sense?
- ➔ Right?
- ➔ If you know what I mean?

BRIDGE PHRASES

- ➔ How does that land for you?
- ➔ I'll pause there to get your thoughts.
- ➔ What are your thoughts when you hear that?

LOG IT

LEAD WITH IT



Inc.

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PRODUCTIVITY

Lyft's CEO Gave a Humble 6-Word Response to a \$2 Billion Mistake. It's a Lesson in Emotional Intelligence

There was plenty of blame to go around after Lyft's recent typo. But CEO David Risher did the right thing: He took ownership.



David Risher.. Getty Images

Questions!