New Report Reveals Critical AI and Trust Gaps in Global Crisis Communications

Global survey of 102 senior professionals across 32 countries highlights urgent needs in AI protocols, cross-functional integration, and trust measurement.

DUBAI, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, January 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new global study reveals that crisis communication professionals are facing an unprecedented preparedness gap as they navigate an increasingly complex threat landscape marked by AI-driven disinformation, eroding public trust, and compound crises.

> "
> The 2026 report shows a dangerous gap: while AI and trust risks are rising, most teams lack the protocols and cross-functional integration needed to respond effectively in a polycrisis era."
> *Philippe Borremans*

The 2026 Crisis, Emergency, and Risk Communication Trends Report, published today by RiskComms, surveyed 102 senior crisis and risk communication professionals across 32 countries to identify the most pressing challenges and opportunities facing the profession.

The research uncovers five critical trends that will define crisis communication through 2026: AI readiness, cross-functional integration, testing and simulation, trust measurement, and the widening capability gap.

The AI Paradox: High Awareness, Low Preparedness

While 37% of professionals rate AI-generated deepfakes as a 'high' or 'critical' risk to their organisations, a striking 77% admit to having no documented protocol for managing such incidents. More than one-third (36%) have no plans whatsoever to develop one.

"The irony is stark," says Philippe Borremans, Managing Director of RiskComms and author of the report. "The very technology that poses the greatest threat to organisational reputation could also help detect and respond to that threat. Yet most organisations remain paralysed, neither fully embracing AI's potential nor adequately preparing for its risks."

AI adoption in crisis communication remains in its infancy, with a mean adoption score of just 2.49 out of 5. The primary barriers are organisational rather than technological: lack of in-house expertise (28%), budget constraints (25%), and data privacy concerns (18%).

The Integration Deficit

The research reveals significant gaps in cross-functional integration, particularly concerning given the rise of compound crises where multiple threats converge simultaneously.

While crisis communication plans show strong integration with Executive Leadership (mean score of 3.26 out of 5), integration weakens dramatically with other critical functions: Human Resources (2.57), Legal (2.75), and Cybersecurity/IT (2.78).

"In an era of polycrisis, the siloed communication function simply doesn't work," Borremans notes. "A cyberattack that triggers a data breach, employee concerns, and media scrutiny requires seamless coordination across IT, Legal, HR, and Communications. Without integration, you don't have a response—you have chaos."

Testing Remains Inconsistent Despite Proven Value

Despite clear evidence that regular testing correlates directly with crisis preparedness, practice remains inconsistent. While 26.5% of organisations test annually, nearly 10% never test their plans at all, and 17.6% test rarely (less than every three years).

The report identifies a "preparedness paradox": organisations know that practice works, yet competing priorities, resource constraints, fear of exposing weaknesses, and lack of clear ownership prevent them from building the muscle memory required for effective crisis response.

The Trust Challenge

A clear majority (65.7%) of professionals agree that maintaining stakeholder trust is more challenging today than five years ago. Yet the discipline of measuring and managing trust remains surprisingly immature, with many organisations relying on ad hoc metrics or anecdotal feedback rather than systematic frameworks.

The primary challenges cited include combating misinformation (15.7%), responding in real-time across multiple channels (14.7%), and reaching all relevant stakeholders (13.7%).

The Capability Chasm

Looking ahead to 2026, professionals identified three critical skill gaps on their teams: AI and technology literacy, data analytics and measurement, and disinformation and digital forensics.

"The crisis communicator of the future must be a polymath—a strategist, technologist, data analyst, and diplomat," says Borremans. "Traditional communication degrees and PR

backgrounds, while valuable, are no longer sufficient."

Call to Action

The report concludes with a strategic framework and actionable recommendations for communication leaders to build resilience, enhance capabilities, and establish themselves as indispensable strategic advisers in an era of polycrisis.

The 2026 Crisis, Emergency, and Risk Communication Trends Report is available for download at: https://www.riskcomms.com/f/the-2026-crisis-emergency-and-risk-communication-trends-report

Philippe Borremans
RiskComms FZCO
+351 910 185 684
phil@riskcomms.com
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn