
CEO

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CARD

FOR REMOTE LEADERSHIP

Powerful Communication for Emerging Leaders
SutherlandGold.com

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Outreach Never Stops

CEOs build leadership, visibility, and engagement through media, events, conferences, as well as digital and social media.

Adapting for the Future

As conferences are canceled, events move online, and the media focuses on COVID-19, CEOs find new ways to reach their audiences directly.

Introduction to Remote Leadership

In January 2020, SutherlandGold began a study to observe how CEOs at startup and high-growth companies effectively build awareness, establish influence, and engage customers, employees, and investors.

What we couldn't imagine then was the colossal shift our world would undergo in just a few months. As people began sheltering in place and CEOs were forced to lead their companies from a computer screen, our study took on a different purpose. What initially began as an attempt to track and identify trends in leaders' strategies fortuitously transformed into a study on remote leadership. Because of our unintentionally timed research, we were able to witness the way leaders modified their communication strategies to fit a time of crisis.

We selected 10 influential CEOs leading high-growth companies from Fortune's 2019 40 Under 40 list. The 10 leaders were then individually scored using SutherlandGold's CEO Scorecard evaluating business performance, visibility in the media, thought leadership, and social media engagement. We expanded the scorecard research by conducting an online survey of CEOs leading startup companies to understand what future high-growth company CEOs prioritize when it comes to their leadership.

The result is a multidimensional picture into what these CEOs prioritize today and in the future when it comes to leading in a virtual world.

While both our timeline and observations were shaken by the pandemic, the big questions we sought to answer remained the same:



HOW DO CEOS MAINTAIN VISIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT IN ISOLATION?



WHO DO CEOS ENGAGE TO SET THE TONE FOR THE INDUSTRY, SHAPE CONVERSATIONS, AND AMPLIFY THEIR VOICE?



WHAT ARE THE LEADING PRACTICES AND BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS?



HOW CAN THESE ENGAGEMENT METHODS BE PUT INTO PRACTICE MOST EFFECTIVELY?



WHERE SHOULD EXECUTIVES INVEST TIME AND RESOURCES?



WHAT ARE SOME EMERGING MODELS AND PROCESSES FOR REMOTE LEADERSHIP?

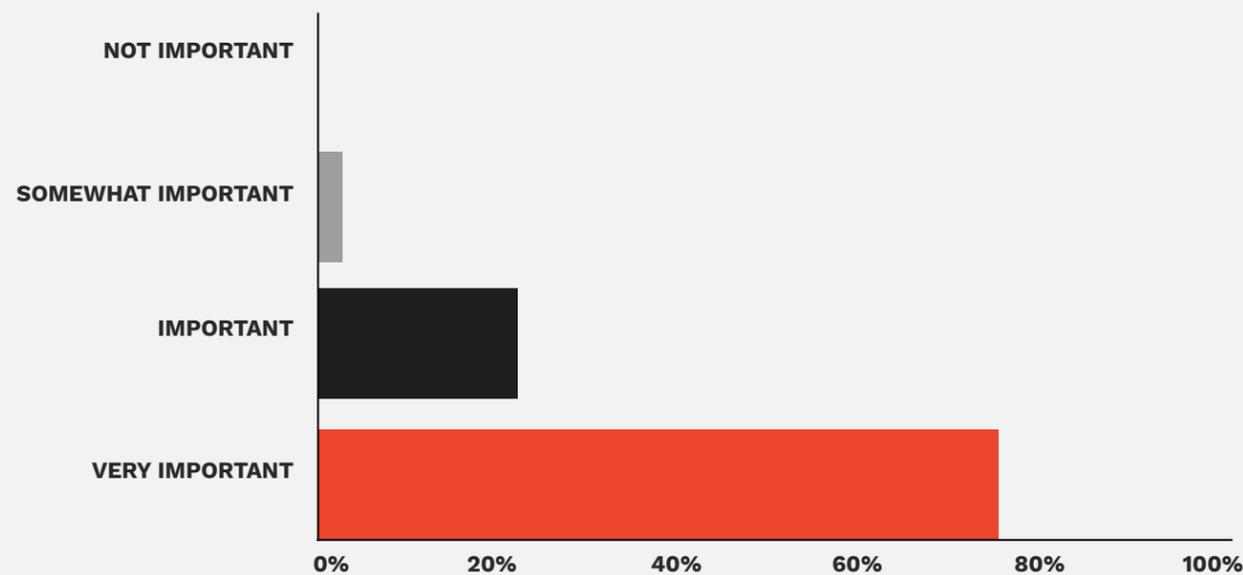
CEOs Leading Startup Companies

A new generation of digital-first CEOs are defining what remote leadership might look like in the post-pandemic world. You can find them leading startup companies in the exploding fintech, biotech, AI, and healthcare industries.

To better understand the CEOs leading startup companies, we conducted an online survey to find out what they prioritize when it comes to their remote leadership, visibility, and engagement. We asked how much time they commit, what resources they use, and which metrics they value in measuring business success.

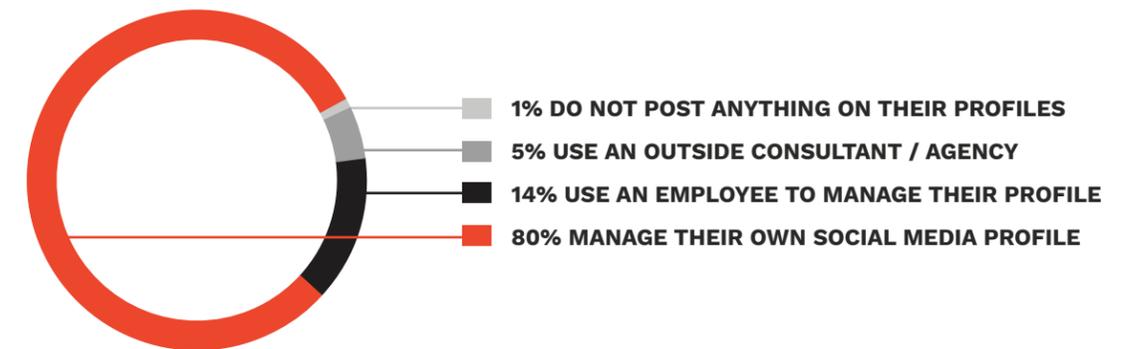
CEOs say engagement is more important than ever

76% of CEOs surveyed say it's very important to maintain engagement and visibility while employees, customers, and other stakeholders are working remotely. And almost two-thirds of chief executives say they are putting more to significantly more time in their visibility and engagement efforts.



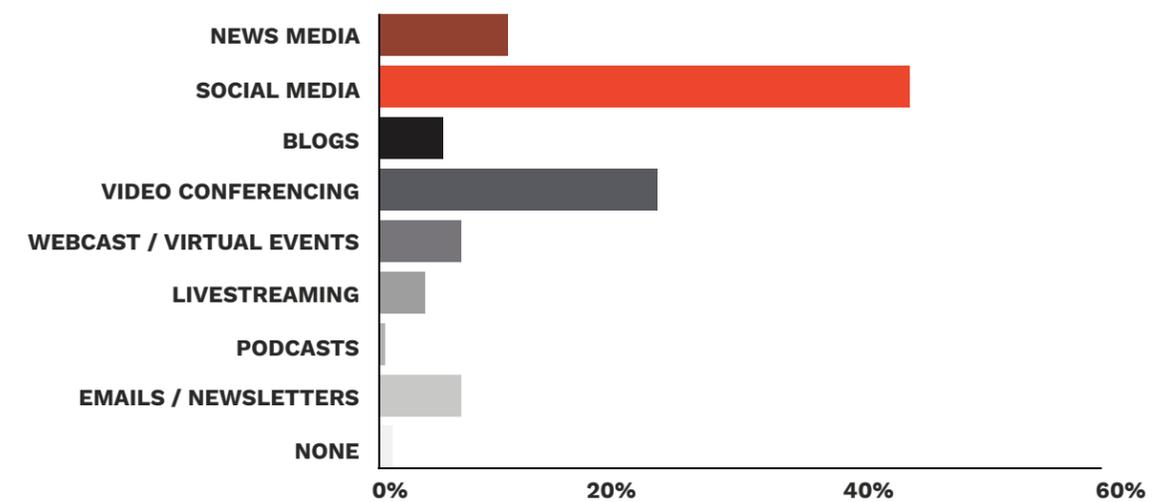
CEOs of the future will own their professional brand

Engagement on social media is mission-critical to CEOs at startup companies. More than 80% of CEOs from our online survey said they manage their own social media presence, while 18% said an employee or outside agency manages their social media engagement.



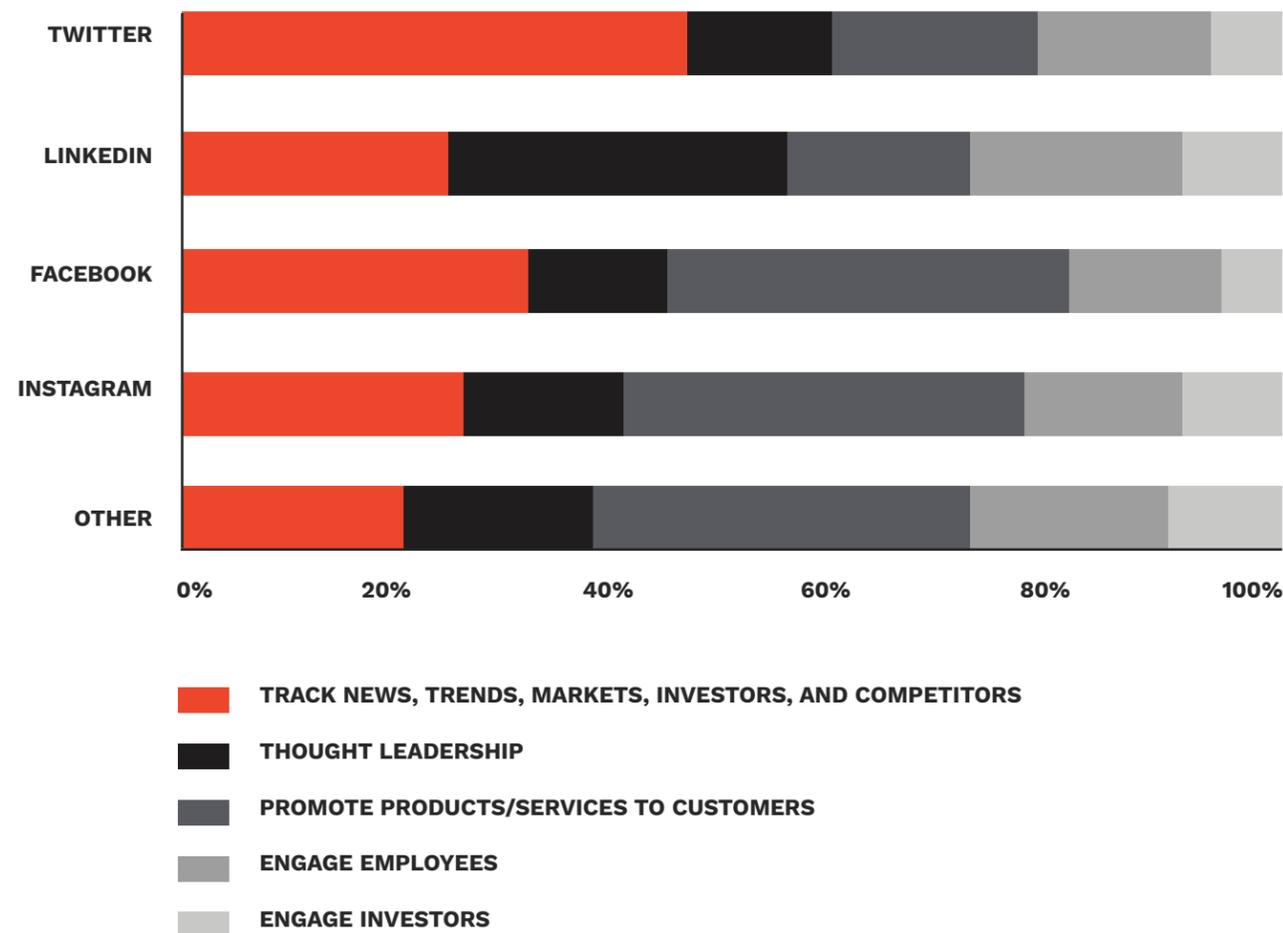
CEOs say social media is top choice for visibility and engagement

Not surprisingly, **41% of the CEOs surveyed said social media channels were their top choice for driving visibility and engagement.** And in our new Zoom-first world, videoconferencing was the second most popular channel, with 24% of CEOs saying they're using that channel to sustain engagement and visibility. Only 11% found the news media to be a key channel for visibility and engagement and 5% of CEOs preferred a personal or company blog.



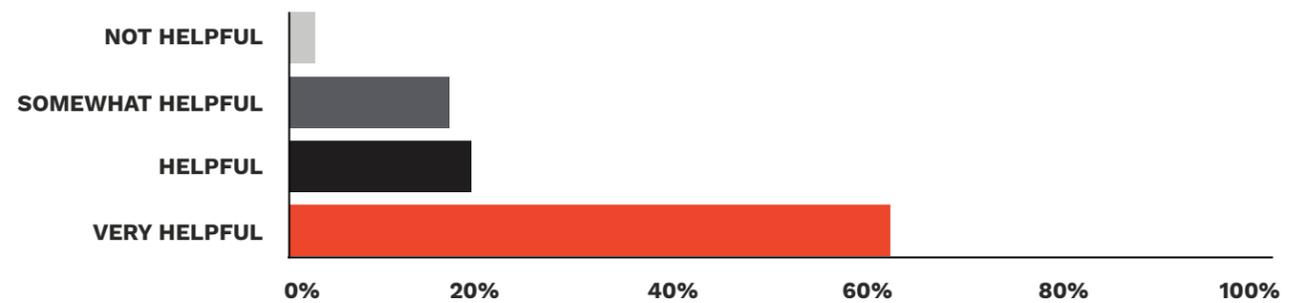
47% of CEOs leverage Twitter to track trends and 30% use LinkedIn for thought leadership

While most CEOs found social media crucial, executives did say that they see different uses for different social platforms. Almost half (47%) said Twitter is the platform they prefer for tracking news. LinkedIn was the preferred channel for thought leadership by a wide margin, with 30% of CEOs calling LinkedIn their thought leadership platform. This is compared to the second place choice of Instagram, which only 15% of CEOs singled out as their thought leadership platform. When it comes to promoting products and services to customers, Facebook and Instagram were neck and neck as the preferred platform with about 37% of CEOs citing Facebook and about 36% citing Instagram for promotions. The only area where social media seemed to get little use by CEOs was in employee engagement.



61% of startup CEOs say social media impacts a company's bottom line

Another response in the survey also explains why so many company leaders feel like it's their job to manage their own social media presence. More than 80% of CEOs said that their engagement and visibility efforts on social media are "helpful" to "very helpful" when it comes to their company's bottom line. **More than 61% said these efforts are "very helpful" to the bottom line.**



Social Media is not just for marketing and promotion

CEOs tell us that it's important to work on both their personal and professional brand and social media is their preferred platform for promoting both. **Facebook was the overwhelming choice, singled out by 50% of CEOs as the preferred platform for promoting their personal use. But LinkedIn was narrowly the platform of choice they found most effective for promoting their professional brand.** It was a tight race in this category among social media platforms.

CEOs are telling us that social media engagement is not just about marketing and promotion. This engagement is seen by an overwhelming majority of CEOs as mission-critical and an integral and important component to a company's financial health. And in these economic and corporate culture challenging times, CEOs are working harder than ever at maintaining social media engagement.



USE FACEBOOK FOR PERSONAL USE



USE LINKEDIN TO PROMOTE THEIR PROFESSIONAL BRAND

Remote CEOs Provide a Preview into the Future of Leadership

SutherlandGold created a CEO Scorecard to help leaders evaluate how their activities stack up against 10 influential CEOs from Fortune's 2019 40 under 40 list.

The CEO Scorecard evaluates each leader's business performance, visibility in the media, thought leadership and social media engagement based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 on the low end. The purpose of the Scorecard is to assess profiles of emerging CEOs to reveal the essence of their leadership. We looked at how they define and articulate an industry-leading agenda for exerting influence before and after the pandemic was announced.

We first scored their activities in 2019 to discover:

- 70% primarily used speaking engagements to set the tone in an industry or niche
- 60% used Instagram for personal use and none used LinkedIn or Facebook to reach audiences directly
- 50% used Twitter occasionally to amplify their voice
- 40% leveraged the media for company news, industry trends, and new products/services
- 10% successfully shaped the conversations by leveraging video to explain new thinking

We found that all of the CEOs have a unique set of skills that are necessary for leading in virtual environments. They understand the importance of context, brevity, transparency, and relevancy when engaging in real-time. They have a digital mindset, are fluent in data, and hyper-visual. More importantly, they all adapt quickly to changes in the market.

The outcome of our study is a better understanding of what executive priorities are when engaging more directly with the communities they serve.

CEO SCORECARD FOR REMOTE LEADERSHIP

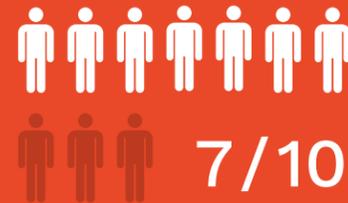
 01	HENRIQUE DUBUGRAS SCORE: 4.74 Brex 	 02	JOY BUOLAMWINI SCORE: 3.10 Algorithmic Justice League 
 03	CARL PEI SCORE: 2.71 OnePlus 	 04	KELLER RINAUDO SCORE: 2.66 Zipline 
 05	BILL LIU SCORE: 2.11 Royole 	 06	MICHAEL MIGNANO SCORE: 1.98 Anchor 
 07	ALYSON FRIEDENSOHN SCORE: 1.48 Modern Health 	 08	JESSIE WISDOM SCORE: 1.41 Humu 
 09	TREVOR MARTIN SCORE: 1.35 Mammoth 	 10	PENG ZHAO SCORE: 1.28 Citadel Securities 

CEOs Adapt to Leading in Isolation

COVID-19 reveals CEOs' social blind spots, event reliance, and media relationship payoffs.

Event cancelations hit CEOs' visibility hard

We found **7 of the 10 leaders** relied primarily on **speaking at events to elevate their visibility and share their thought leadership**. Once the pandemic hit, 50% of the CEOs we tracked embraced virtual events but did not significantly increase the visibility of their original thinking via reports, articles, blog posts, videos, or podcasts.



SHARED THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AT EVENTS



INCREASED TWEET AND FOLLOWER COUNT

Twitter was immediately leveraged by CEOs

As soon as the pandemic was announced, **70% of the high-growth CEOs we researched increased both their follower count and added to their total number of tweets**. Having an active social media presence is an invaluable advantage in times of crisis. Leaders who transparently and consistently communicate the state of their business are able to build trust, loyalty, and visibility for their employees and brand.

LinkedIn and Facebook are forgotten

Surprisingly, only **2 out of the 10 CEOs we tracked contributed articles or engaged audiences via LinkedIn**. This is an open opportunity, as LinkedIn is the #1 professional network for B2B companies, and approximately 80% of the 100+ CEOs we surveyed preferred LinkedIn followed by Facebook for engagement and thought leadership. We also found none of the 10 CEOs leading high-growth companies have public profiles on Facebook, yet media articles about those CEOs are shared the most on Facebook.

Video influences and drives conversations

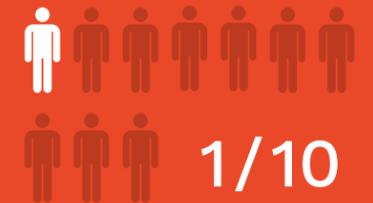
CEOs leading conversations all had established platforms to share their brand news, product/services, opinions, and ideas, but only one out of the 10 CEOs successfully **leveraged video to spark conversations that influenced new thinking about the AI space**.

The influential are even more influential

Only **4 out of the 10 high-growth CEOs we tracked were consistently mentioned by the media in 2019**, with these 4 averaging 100 media mentions per month. The most visible CEO had strong media coverage pre-pandemic and saw a 76% increase after the pandemic was announced in March.



CONTRIBUTED OR ENGAGED VIA LINKEDIN



LEVERAGED VIDEO TO SPARK CONVERSATION



WERE MENTIONED BY THE MEDIA IN 2019

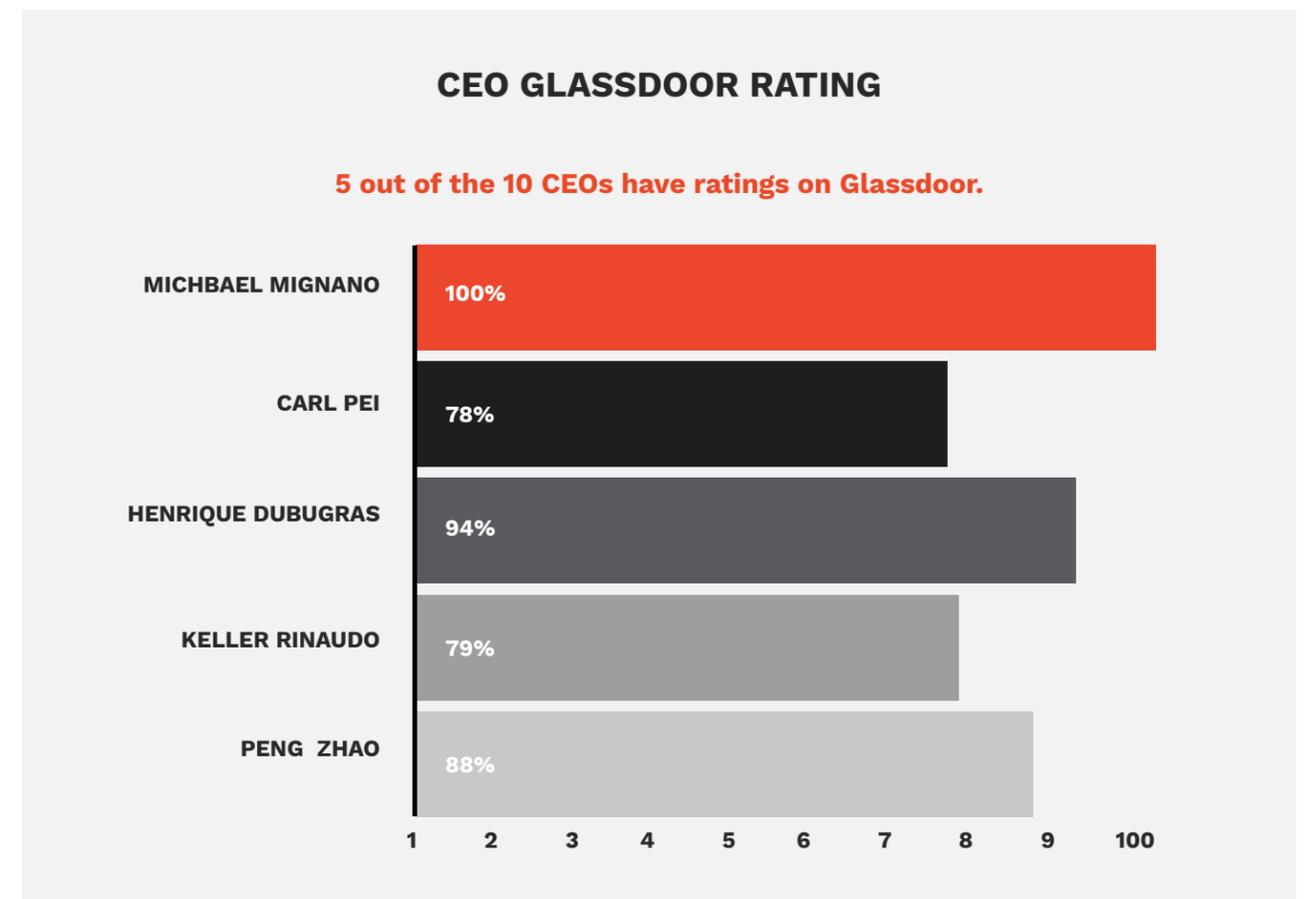
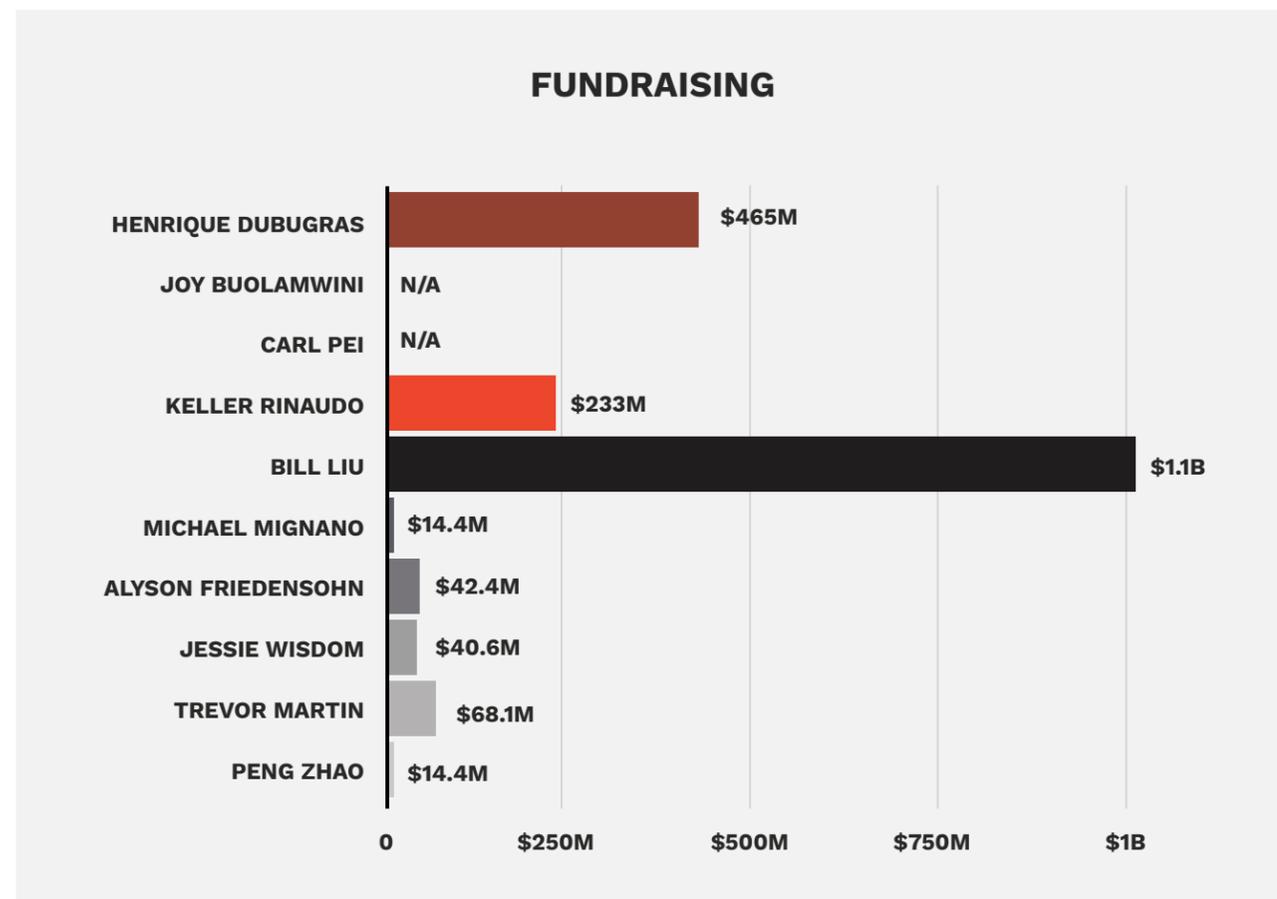
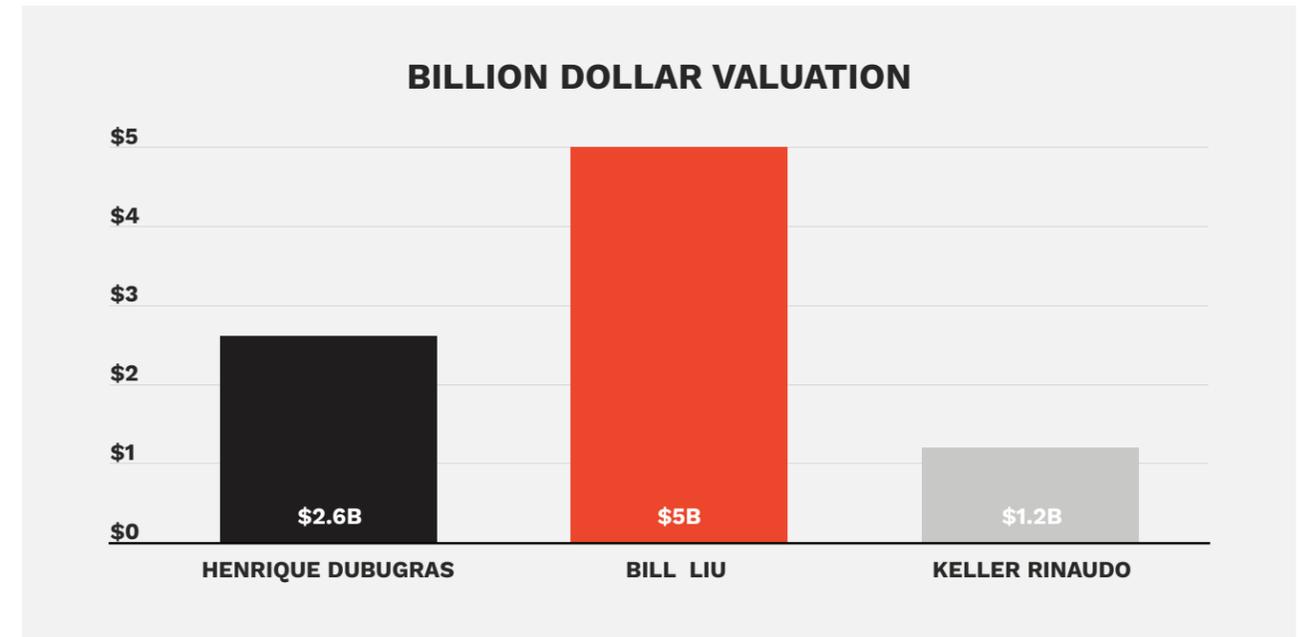
BUSINESS

Business performance does not equal more visible leadership

While all CEOs we researched displayed a healthy business based on their fundraising, valuation, growth, and employee reviews on Glassdoor, many did not excel across the board. The average score for media mentions, thought leadership, and social media were average scores were 2.0.

Multichannel visibility builds industry influence for active CEOs

CEOs who had high business scores (i.e. evaluations, investment) also had higher media mentions. The top two executives with the highest media score (Joy Buolamwini and Henrique Dubugras) also had relatively high thought leadership and social media scores.

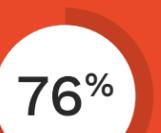


Media Mentions Rise During COVID-19



157%

INCREASE IN ALYSON FRIEDENSOHN'S 2020 MEDIA MENTIONS



76%

OF HENRIQUE DUBUGRAS' MEDIA MENTIONS OCCURED MAR-APR



20%

OF PENG ZHAO'S MEDIA MENTIONS OCCURED MAR-APR

MEDIA

CEOs with media relationships move to the front of the line during COVID-19

Only 4 out of the 10 CEOs we tracked were consistently mentioned by the media in 2019 averaging 100 media mentions per month. The most visible CEO had strong media coverage pre-pandemic and saw a 76% increase after the pandemic was announced in March. It's vital to establish relationships with media and broadcast outlets to bring specific POVs to the front of the line.

More than a third of CEO media mentions occurred as the pandemic peaked

Since our analysis began on January 31, 2020, media mentions for most leaders occurred in March and April, during the height of pandemic in the United States.

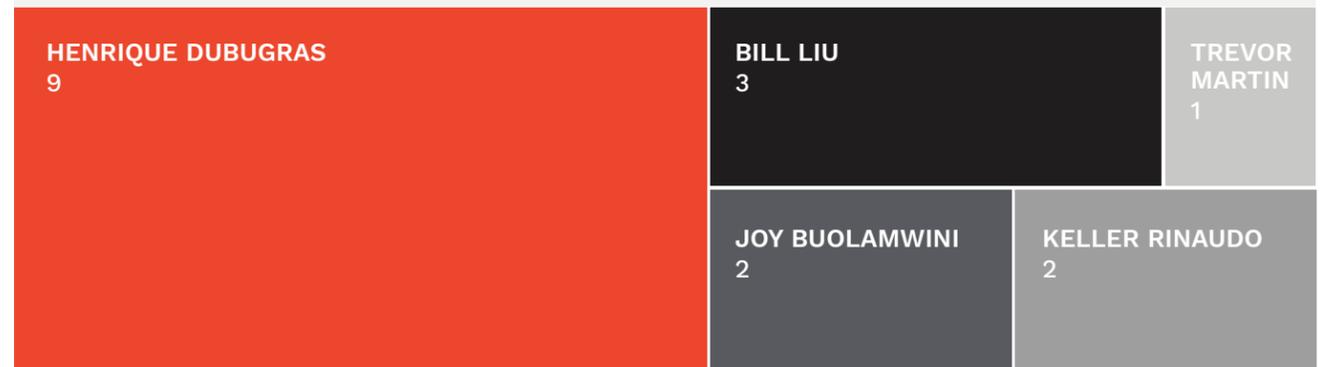
Alyson Friendensohn, co-founder and CEO of Modern Health was included in 77 pieces of coverage in 2019. Since January 2020, she has been featured in 198 articles as the coronavirus began in the United States.

The significant increase is a direct result of the growing interest in healthcare services for mental health.

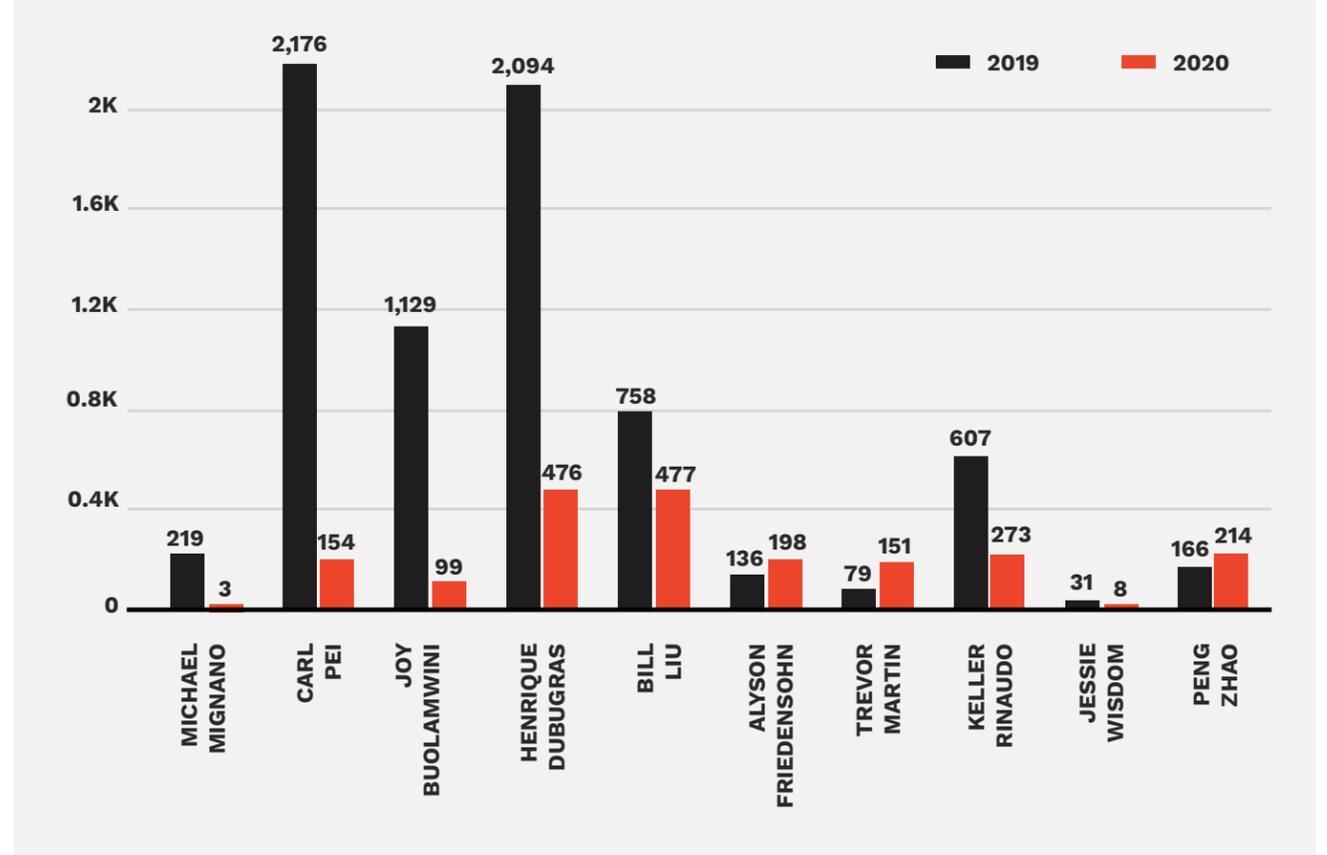
Henrique Dubugras has seen 476 media mentions since January—365 of these, or 76%, occurred in March and April. Henrique Dubugras' increase in media presence can most likely be attributed to Brex's recent acquisitions, their new webinar series Brexfast In Bed, and attracting \$150M in additional funding. Henrique consistently shares his insights on the impact of COVID-19 on fintech and what this means for VCs.

Peng Zhao, CEO of Citadel Securities had 166 media mentions in 2019. Since January 2020, he has been featured in over 214 articles, 20% of which occurred in March and April. Coverage was a result of Zhao organizing a donation of 1 million masks for Chicago.

BROADCAST MENTIONS



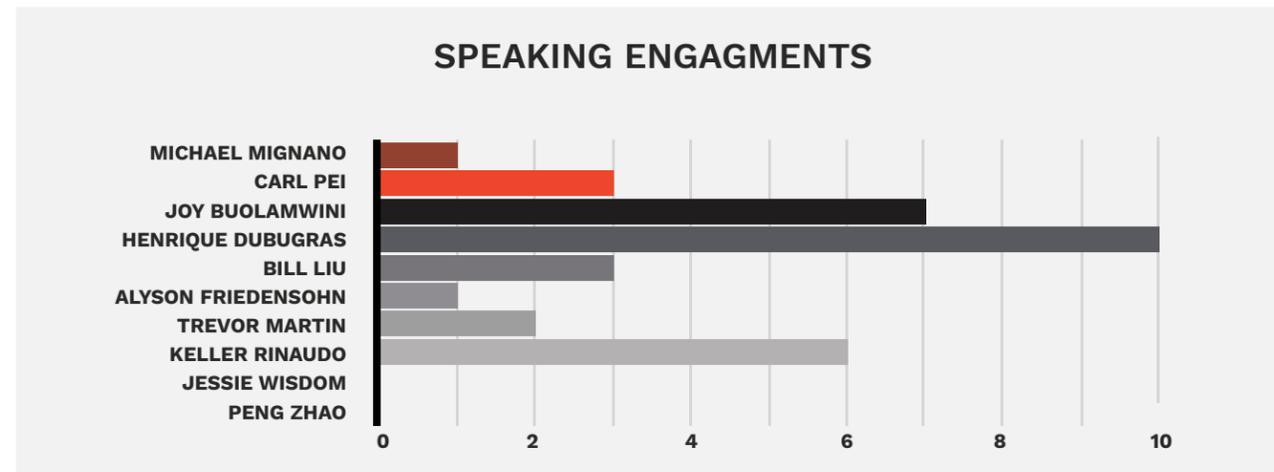
NEWS MEDIA MENTIONS



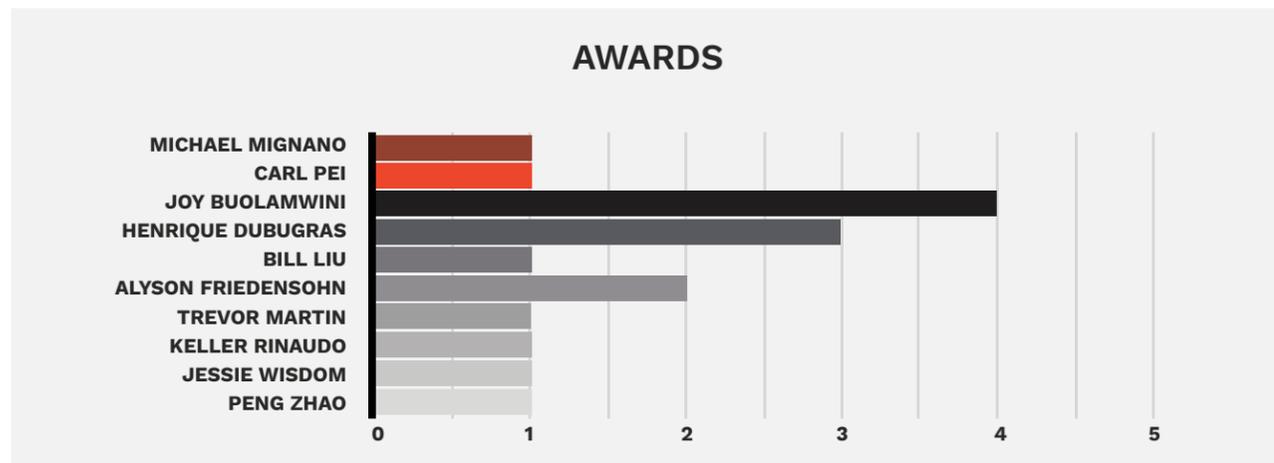
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Speaking and awards used primarily for thought leadership

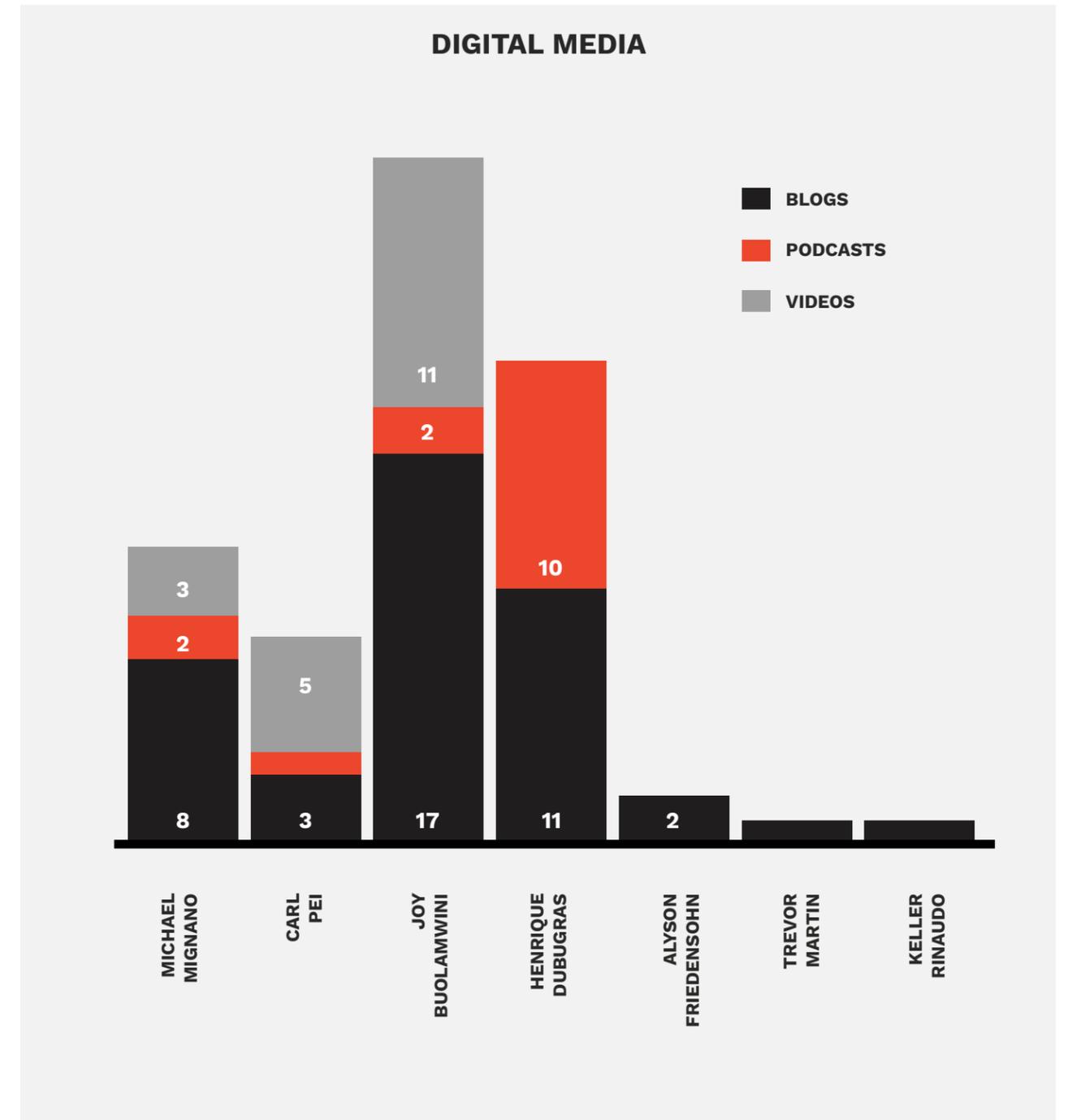
We found 7 of the 10 leaders we researched shared their thought leadership primarily by speaking at events in 2019. CEOs were featured speakers in conferences like TechCrunch Disrupt, SXSW, Saastr and WSJ Tech Live. Additionally, some speakers were part of more niche trade conferences. All 10 leaders spoke individually, as opposed to being part of a panel.



All of the leaders have awards in their sector and, of course, 1 award in common: Fortune's 40 Under 40.



In addition to sharing their insights and opinions, 8 leaders were guests on podcasts with a total average of 1.7 podcast interviews prior to the pandemic.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



Once the pandemic hit, **50% of the CEOs we tracked embraced virtual events, and contributed to videos, podcasts, or live streaming.**

Executives with companies that are directly using their services to combat the virus are naturally seeing an increase in media coverage. However, some executives are using this time to build unique thought leadership platforms through avenues like webinars. Many of the CEOs shared insights into how the pandemic will impact their industry.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SUMMARY



70% OF CEOS USE SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS TO SET THE TONE IN AN INDUSTRY OR NICHE.



40% OF THE EXECUTIVES SPEAK AT EVENTS TO SHARE INSIGHTS, OPINIONS, AND TRENDS.



30% HOST EVENTS TO MARKET NEW PRODUCTS/SERVICES

Brexfast in Bed

Brex's webinar series, Brexfast In Bed is a direct result of remote working. With many conferences being postponed or canceled, Brex has been able to attract media interest through this webinar series and share insights into COVID-19's impact on the fintech space.



Henrique Dubugras

Brex

Co-CEO,
Co-Founder

WATCH

LinkedIn Unscripted

Joy Buolamwini, founder and CEO of Algorithmic Justice League, participated in a LinkedIn Live event amid the pandemic titled Unscripted with Shelley Zalis.



Joy Buolamwini

Algorithmic
Justice League

Founder, CEO

WATCH

Zoom Webinar

Trevor Martin, CEO of Mammoth Biosciences gave a Zoom webinar in late May to QB3, for California Institute of Quantitative Biosciences.



Trevor Martin

Mammoth
Biosciences

CEO

LEARN MORE

SOCIAL MEDIA

Direct audience engagement via social media is on the rise

We evaluated dynamic audience interaction and engagement by calculating blog frequency, LinkedIn and Facebook Live reactions, along with Twitter and Instagram ratios.

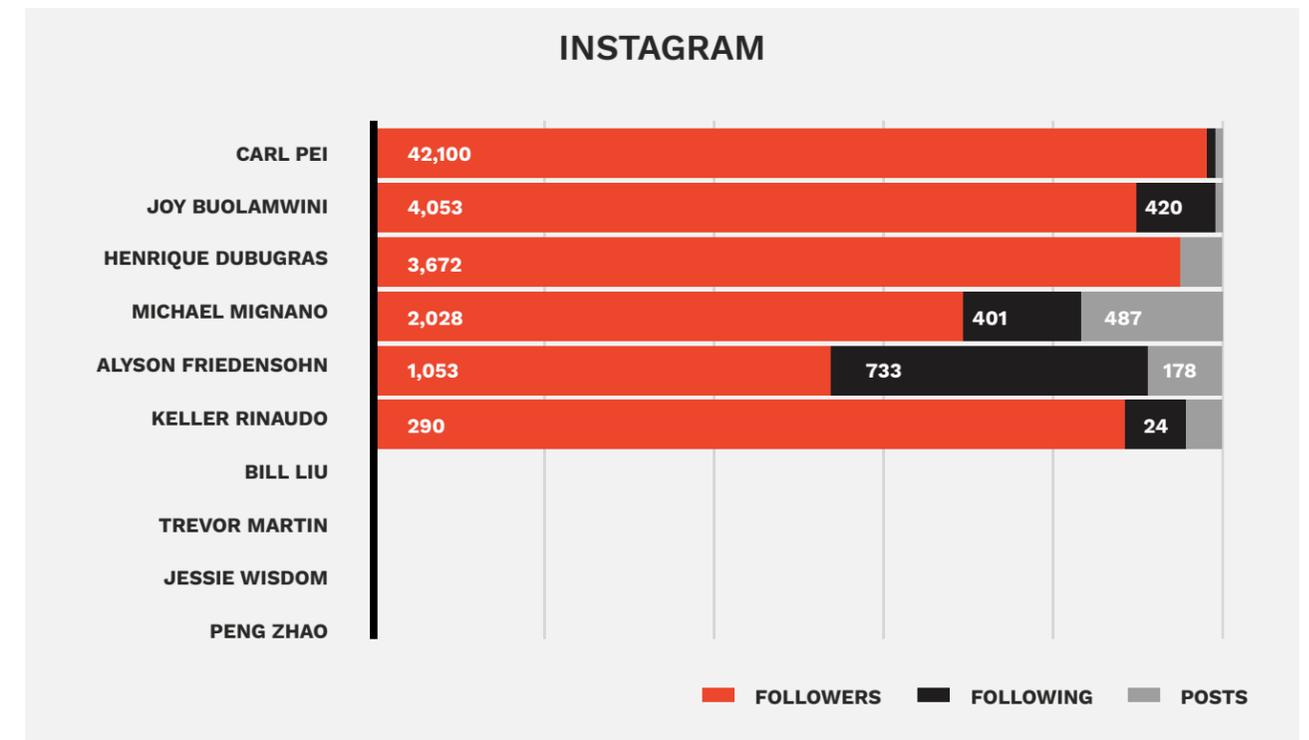
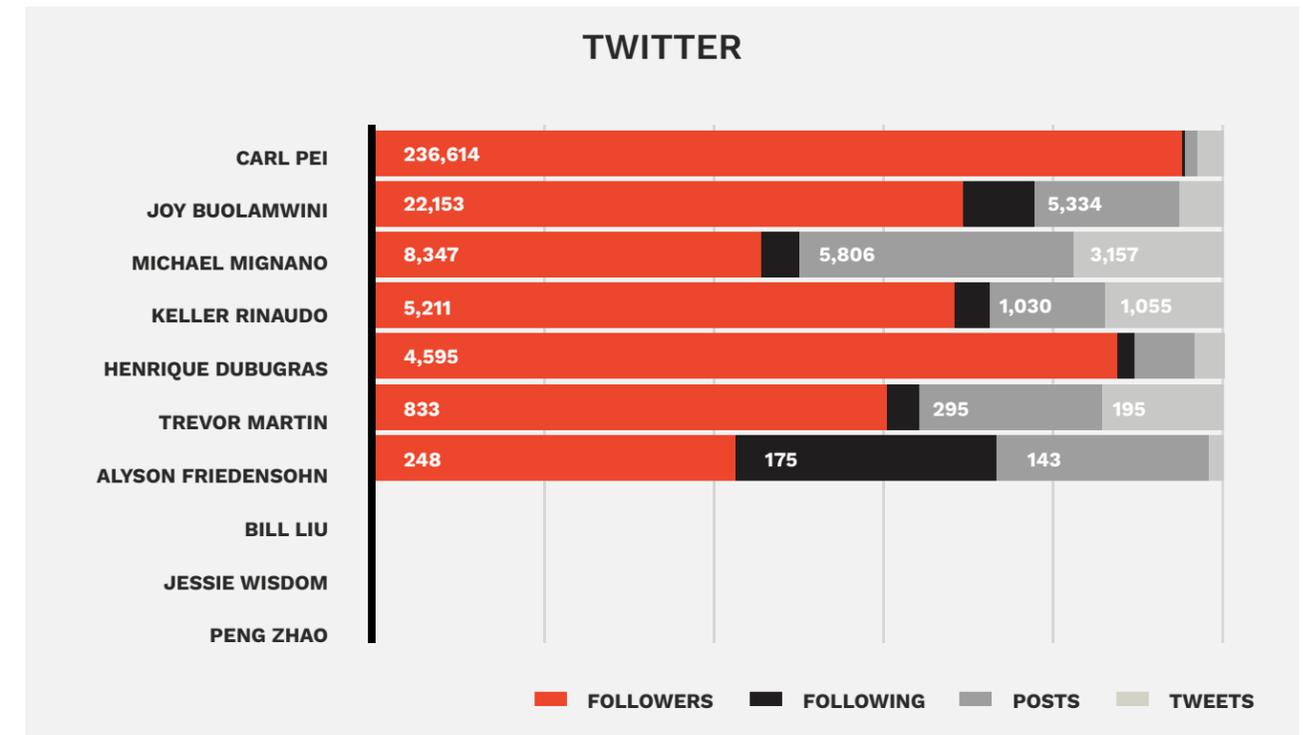
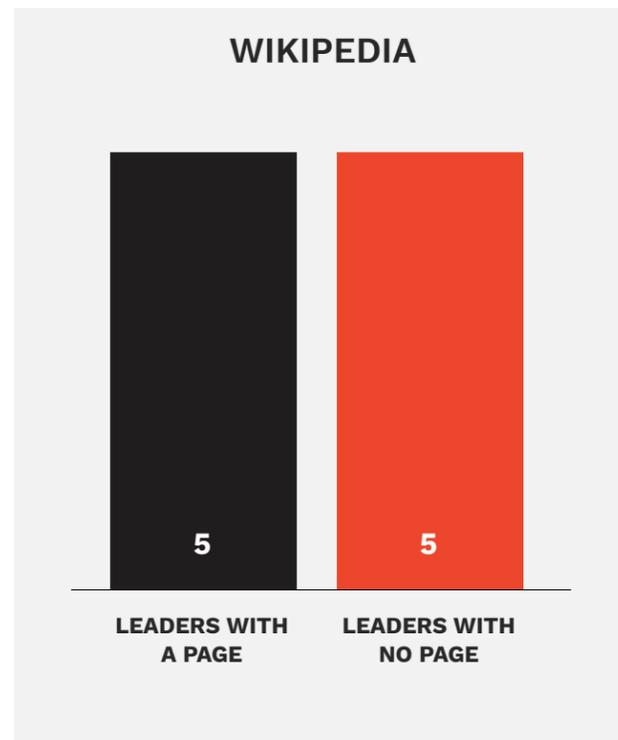
40% use social media to amplify their voice and brand story

5% use social media to shape conversations and explain new thinking

35% use social media to set the tone in an industry or niche

5% use social media to recruit, engage employees, or serve customers

15% use social media to market products or services



5/10

LEVERAGE TWITTER

70%

INCREASED THEIR ENGAGEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

Low engagement with influencers and target audiences pre-pandemic

There was not a strong indication that the executives analyzed were using social media to engage audiences. Instead, they were using social media channels—namely Twitter and Instagram—to promote their company brand, drive traffic to their site, or spur discussions about topics relevant to their industry. 7 of the 10 leaders have a Twitter profile but only 5 regularly use Twitter and received a high score (4-5) for their Twitter profile. On average, leaders we analyzed have an average following of 21,015 and an average of 1,294 tweets.

70% of the CEOs increased their engagement on social media during the pandemic

Having an active social media presence is great for building your professional brand, and an invaluable advantage in times of crisis. **7 CEOs with Twitter accounts increased both their follower count and added to their total number of tweets** as soon as the pandemic was announced.

Zipline has been delivering COVID-19 test samples in Ghana which has prompted more media mentions of CEO, Keller Rinaudo. Additionally, Rinaudo has used this news to increase his social media presence on Twitter. Some CEOs, like Martin Trevor of Mammoth Sciences, have increased their social media presence since the outbreak. Trevor’s follower count has seen an increase of more than 100 followers since the coronavirus outbreak in the United States as a direct result of the growing interest in healthcare, and biotechnology in the age of COVID. Alyson Friedensohn has seen increases in both social media and media mentions due to the increase in overall healthcare industry coverage.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMARY



CEOS WITH A HIGH FOLLOWING HAD A LOWER ENGAGEMENT. 70% OF ACTIVE CEOS INCREASED THEIR ENGAGEMENT ONCE THE PANDEMIC HIT. THREE OUT OF TEN CEOS ARE VERIFIED ON TWITTER.



THE #1 B2B SOCIAL NETWORK HAS ALL TEN LEADERS WITH PROFILES. ONLY TWO CEOS HAVE POSTED ARTICLES AND THREE ENGAGE ON LINKEDIN.



ONE CEO IS VERIFIED AND THREE ARE PRIVATE. SIX OUT OF TEN LEADERS HAVE PROFILES WITH ONLY TWO ENGAGING WITH AUDIENCES REGULARLY.



NONE OF THE LEADERS HAVE A PUBLIC PROFILE, YET AUDIENCES SHARE MEDIA ARTICLES MENTIONING THEIR NAMES ON FACEBOOK THE MOST.



JOY BUOLAMWINI IS THE ONLY CEO WITH A YOUTUBE CHANNEL. SHE HAS APPROXIMATELY 600 SUBSCRIBERS, 11 VIDEOS, AND AN AVERAGE OF 8,000 VIEWS.



FIVE OUT OF TEN CEOS HAVE A WIKIPEDIA PAGE WITH CARL PEI ATTRACTING 79,284 PAGE VIEWS IN 2019.

Conclusion

You Are Your Brand

When we think about Tesla, we think Elon Musk. We equate Tim Cook with Apple, and Mark Zuckerberg with Facebook. Major business publications like Forbes, Fortune, and The Wall Street Journal all focus their coverage on company leaders, and investors are betting on executives as much as the companies themselves. As our study found, right now, the only window into how these leaders are managing their companies is via their digital footprint, media coverage, and across social media channels. These channels are where your primary audience will gauge whether you are a leader, a follower, or a non-participant in the current climate.

If you have an existing social media presence, then you are already ahead of the game. If not, here are suggestions based on our study:



ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS

The goal is to create and share quality content that adds value to the lives of your audience. Focus on topics that are positive, solutions-based, or insightful opinions. Your engagement goal should be to address shares, questions, or comments within 24 hours. Over time, aim to make at least four interactions a week on one platform to build a following.



HAVE A TEAM AND A GAME PLAN

At this moment in time, executives should be proactively connecting with the fluctuating network around them. This means following, sharing with, and informing all audiences with company news, direction, and resources. By engaging with influencers on various platforms, executives will become a valuable resource and expert on topics of their choice.



tone, voice, and style

When cultivating your presence, make sure you are consistent with your tone of voice, frequency of posting, and variety of content. For instance, Elon Musk's off-the-cuff Twitter persona often aims to provoke discussion and diverges significantly from Bill Gates' more polished, thoughtful, and engaging persona. Developing this will be gradual, and may shift depending on the organization's needs.



FOCUS ON QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

Some leaders will post several times a day across multiple channels to keep up with the constant news cycle, while others will dedicate their time to one channel. You will want to align your objectives with your audiences and the channels where they frequent. For example, use LinkedIn for employees, partners, and customers. Use Twitter for media and industry influencers. Use Facebook and Instagram for broader consumer audiences. Tracking the performance and communication of other leaders will enable you to have clarity about audience expectations.



BE A ROLE MODEL

Engage in conversations with your audiences to role-modeling behavior for employees, and let customers know you are listening to their needs, ideas, and successes. Communicating the state of the business broadly for investors and identifying opportunities to co-create content with partners is also a good way to engage. This give-and-take helps to first, identify, and second, boost your relationships. Throughout this process, scouting out and monitoring detractors will be just as important.



EMPOWER EVERY EMPLOYEE TO BE A BRAND ADVOCATE

Many leaders are investing time in developing a company-wide social media strategy that leverages every remote employee to be the eyes and ears for the brand, while supporting broader company initiatives including leveraging social media for customer service, recruiting, and employee engagement.

Methodology

Before the pandemic began, SutherlandGold was tracking 10 influential CEOs from Fortune's 40 Under 40 list to see how they raised their visibility and engaged their audiences across channels.

We first selected 10 CEOs from high-growth companies specifically for their work in the business, healthcare, and technology sectors. We intentionally excluded executives from larger companies (like Apple or Google), celebrities, athletes, and politicians in order to maintain a narrow pool, removing the possibility of outliers that would skew our data. The 10 leaders were then individually scored using SutherlandGold's CEO Scorecard to evaluate business performance, visibility in the media, thought leadership, and social media engagement.

During the pandemic, we conducted an online survey answered by 125 CEOs leading startup companies with 50 to 1000 employees in technology, healthcare, biotech, pharmaceuticals and banking/financial industries. We set out to learn about their visibility and engagement efforts by asking how much time they commit, what resources they use, and which metrics they value in measuring business success.

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Special Thanks

The authors would like to thank Lesley Gold, Margie Kane, Louise Callagy, Yalda Rafie, Marisa Steck, and Brittany McFarland for all of their support and guidance.



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AND

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