



Public Affairs  
Council

# Core Competencies for High Achieving Public Affairs Teams

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# About Me



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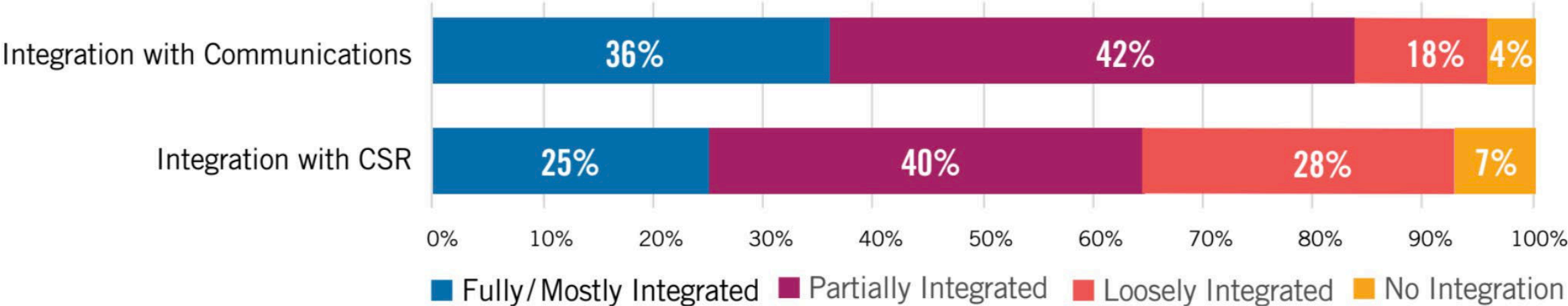
# How Practice of Public Affairs Is Changing

- Growing awareness of how political risk affects business success
- Relationship between reputation risk and political risk
- Negative partisanship and gridlock
- Greater reliance on digital strategies
- CEOs playing larger role in advocacy
- Companies under public scrutiny



# Integration of Government Relations and Related Functions

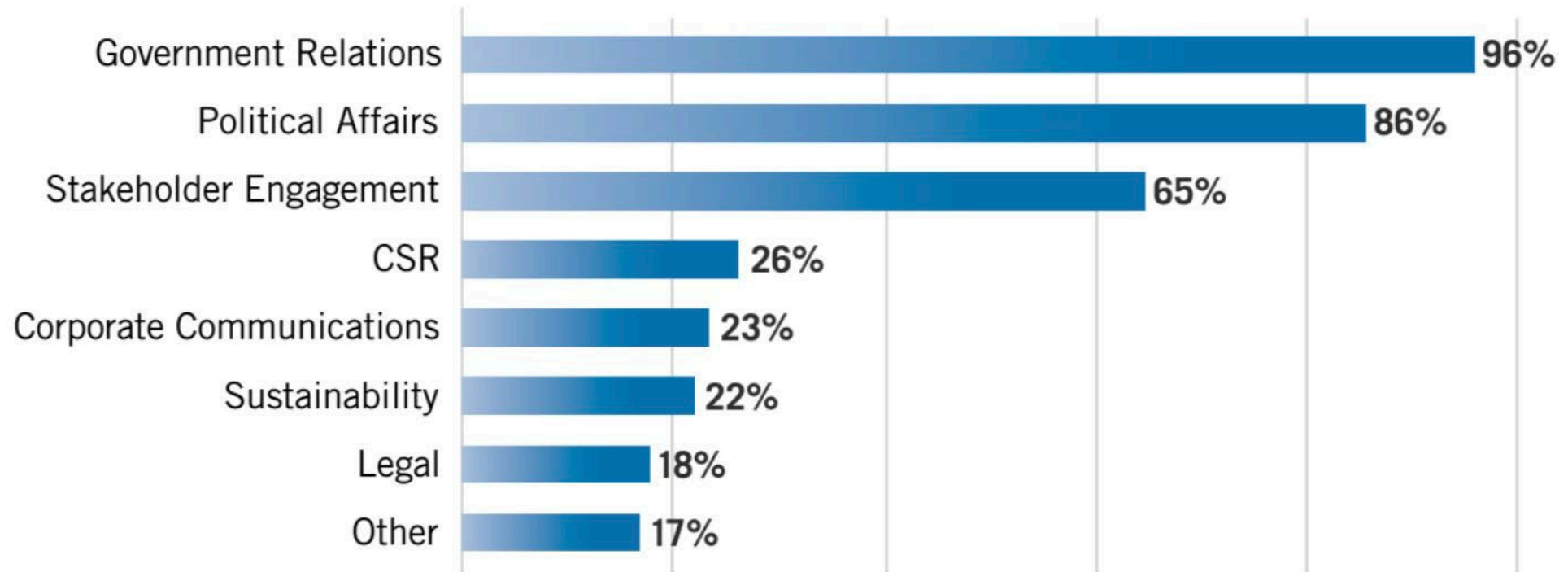
Between 2020 and 2023, full or partial integration between government relations and communications rose from 70% to 78%.



Source: *State of Corporate Public Affairs Report*, Public Affairs Council, 2023



# Functions Located Within Public Affairs



Source: *State of Corporate Public Affairs Report*, Public Affairs Council, 2023





# Evolving Profile of Public Affairs Professionals

- The War for Talent is real
- Emergence of hybrid work
- Organizations prioritizing interpersonal and writing skills
- Organizations want people with subject matter expertise, management skills/experience, **AND** strong network of political and policy contacts
- The field of public affairs is more important — and more demanding — than ever



# 10 Public Affairs Core Competencies



1. Coaching and managing
2. Persuasive communication
3. Creativity and innovation
4. Collaboration and teamwork
5. Continuous learning
6. Political courage
7. Social sensitivity
8. Campaigns and strategies
9. Achievement orientation
10. Complexity orientation

# 10 Core Competencies for PA

1. Coaching and managing
2. Persuasive communication
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5. Continuous learning
6. Political courage
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# Core Competencies in Practice

	A	B	C	D	E
25	<b>COLLABORATION &amp; TEAMWORK</b>				
26	<b>Competency Definition:</b>				
27	Works well with others, horizontally and vertically.				
28	Areas of Focus	Role Model Behaviors	Excels Behaviors	Effective Behaviors	Developing Behaviors
29	Common goals.	Inspires and motivates other organizations to collaborate in achieving shared goals.	Inspires own team with a compelling vision of future achievement.	Facilitates the development of common goals.	Solicits input for possible shared goals.
30	Clear roles and responsibilities.	Anticipates and negotiates new roles and responsibilities in response to changing environment.	Ensures team members are focused on agreed to roles and responsibilities.	Facilitates a clear understanding and commitment to roles and responsibilities.	Identifies needs and expectations of partners.
31	Honest communication and feedback.	Takes responsibility for decisions and seeks to have team learn from successes and failures.	Monitors impact of team performance on others and acts on feedback.	Provides partners and team members with relevant information; accepts feedback from team and partners.	Identifies information relevant to partners and team members and solicits feedback.



# Golden Rules for Leadership

- Come from a place of “Yes” without being a Yes-person.
- There’s no magic number in terms of years or experience to become an expert.
- New skills and experiences are required for growth. Cultivate a growth mindset.
- Don’t burn bridges. Always take the high road.



# Leadership Soft Skills



**Growth mindset.** Willing to embrace/promote change. Be uncomfortable with being uncomfortable. Ask questions, be curious, use your strategic lens.



**Have a point of view.** What's your unique perspective? Be curious and observant; know what's happening around you and in the world.



**Set the rules of the road.** Both with your manager, clients, those you manage or in project management. Need to know. Good to know. Don't need to know.



**Follow through.** Do what you say you're going to do. Your manager is delegating things to you to take them off their plate, but they never really leave their mind. If they're asking, you're losing.



**Develop a holistic perspective.** Look at things through the lens of the entire business. What are other competing priorities happening on any given day. Know the flow.

# Leadership Soft Skills



**Timing is everything.** Understand that everyone has their own priorities they are juggling. Be thoughtful about when and how you deliver information internally.



**Confidence often wins over competence.** Develop the ability to make judgement calls and operate independently without multiple check-ins; ability to navigate ambiguity and risk.



**Confident, concise communication is key.** Get to the point and be clear without passive language. Stop apologizing unless it's truly warranted.



**Be efficient with people's time.** Always have an agenda (literally and metaphorically).



**Leadership goes beyond the job description.** If you're just hitting the bullets in the JD, you're not hitting the mark. What's your intangible value? Be eager to learn and raise your hand for more.



**Kindness is key.** Be kind, genuine and empathetic.



# 8 Traits of Leading PA Teams

1. Senior Management Support
2. Linkage with Business Units
3. Issues Management Process
4. Collaboration Across Functions
5. Innovative Advocacy Strategies
6. High Employee Involvement
7. Smart Use of External Resources
8. Measurement and Evaluation





# Senior Management Support

#1

Involvement and endorsement needed from C-suite executives

## How to Earn Support

- Develop clear processes for prioritizing issues and developing strategies
- Create measurement/evaluation system
- Benchmark what other companies do
- Gradually get senior team involved in advocacy and outreach



# Linkage with Business Units

Remove obstacles to growth and create new business opportunities

## How to Create Linkage

- Treat heads of business units like your best customers
- Ask them to complete annual report card for you and your team
- Make a commitment to learn their issues so you can be a better strategic advisor



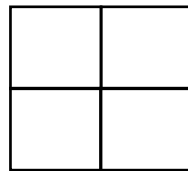
# Issues Management Process

#3

Ensure focus on most important priorities

## How to Develop an IM System

- Interview stakeholders to identify major and minor policy and reputation issues
- Score issues for importance and affectability
- Plot them on 4 quadrants
- Identify key issues



# Collaboration Across Functions

#4

Coordinate government affairs, communications and CSR/social impact functions

## How to Collaborate

- Work together to create joint public affairs and issues management plans
- Form issue teams that cut across disciplines
- Cultivate competency in policy communications



# Use of Innovative Advocacy Strategies

#5

Learn new methods for advocacy

## How to Keep Up

- Attend conferences and workshops
- Follow up with speakers at executive education events
- Read profiles of award-winning programs
- Keep a “great idea file”





# High Level of Employee Involvement

#6

Engage employees through PAC, grassroots/GOTV programs, or community service

## How to Grow Engagement

- Keep employees up-to-date on issues and goals
- Cultivate and recognize champions
- Hold recognition events with senior management
- Use various PAC incentive strategies



# Smart Use of External Resources

#7

Effectively manage associations, coalitions and consultants

## How to Ensure Effectiveness

- If you're paying dues, strive to be in a leadership position
- Be clear about a coalition's objectives and know how much you're willing to compromise
- Don't assume a contract lobbyist will put you ahead of all their other clients



# Measurement and Evaluation

#8

Maintain robust performance management/evaluation system

## How to Approach Measurement

- Articulate your value proposition first
- Focus on impact, not actions
- Metrics should reflect the language of management and corporate culture
- Metrics should be used to track improvement, not justify your value





Leadership is not determined by any position on the organizational chart. It's developed over time in each interaction and how we show up and speak up. Use your voice and take a seat at every table.



*Wendy Davidson, President & CEO, The Hain Celestial Group*





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