

# New Survey Research Shows How Financial Institutions Can Build Trust in a High-Risk Environment

In today's environment, strong financial performance alone does not define your company's brand or protect its reputation. Your credibility is shaped in part by public sentiment and media coverage, which in turn informs how investors, decisionmakers, and your employees view your company and shape the environment in which it operates.

To understand this broader audience, Global Strategy Group conducted a nationwide survey to assess American's perceptions of financial institutions and key drivers of credibility and trust. Our findings provide critical insights about how to communicate to important stakeholders.

## FINANCIAL TIMES

### The \$20bn+ exodus from private credit



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## Engage your adjacent audience

Financial institutions operate in an environment shaped not only by institutional investors and the "financial elite," but by a wider audience – including media, policymakers, and the general public.

30% of Americans say they only have a general sense of what's happening in financial markets and find the details confusing, and 66% expect companies to proactively explain them.

When these broader audiences lack clarity or misinterpret key issues there can be downstream impacts: policymakers and regulators take action; companies have a hard time recruiting top-tier talent; and investors get spooked.

That's why it's important to manage all your audiences. Don't just preach to the choir.

## Elevate your executives as thought leaders, not just brand ambassadors

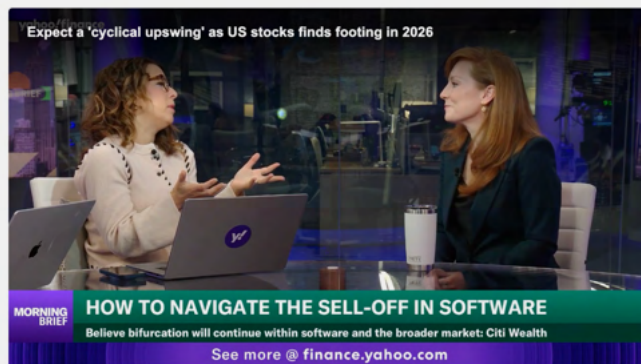
Americans are far more likely to believe information from industry experts (84%) or journalists (76%) than from companies directly — just 6% say companies are their most trusted source.

Therefore, financial companies must position their executives as credible experts within the broader media ecosystem, not just as corporate spokespeople.

Given that 40% of voters first encounter financial news through headlines, executives should build credibility through earned media and use company owned platforms to amplify those media hits.

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## Manage high-pressure moments with consistency

In high-stakes moments like major transactions and periods of economic or market volatility, gaps in communication are quickly filled by external voices. How a company responds is a significant driver of trust – 52% of Americans say their confidence depends on it. media, policymakers, and the general public.

47% say that avoiding questions or saying “no comment” undermines credibility, reinforcing the importance of engaging.

Clarity and consistency in messaging are equally critical. While 85% say they would take action if communications are unclear or misleading, such as moving money or avoiding a particular firm, 35% specifically point to a company's changing explanations over time as a top reason they lose confidence.

Financial firms should have communications plans in place to guide their crisis response and ensure clear, consistent messaging across audiences.

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Bank stocks are having a rough February



Source: FactSet