

A FREE UNCOM MEDIA RESOURCE



Speak the Language.

A field guide to the terms, definitions, and jargon of corporate communications, public relations, crisis management, reputation, and digital forensics, so you always know what the room is talking about.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Eight sections covering the language of communications, from foundational terms to crisis management to digital forensics.

Plain, clear definitions, written the way you would explain them to a colleague, not a textbook.

A quick-reference acronym cheat sheet for the terms you see most often.

CLARITY • CONSISTENCY • TRUST

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Note Before You Start

Every industry has its own language, and communications is no exception. The trouble is that most people learn this language in pieces, picking up a term here and there on the job, without ever seeing the whole map.

That gap shows up at the worst times. In a planning meeting, in a crisis, in a conversation with an agency or a reporter, the terminology moves fast, and it is easy to nod along without being entirely sure what someone just said.

WHY THIS MATTERS

You do not need a communications degree to run a good organization. You do need to understand the language well enough to ask the right questions and make informed decisions.

This guide is organized the way you would encounter these ideas in the real world: foundational communications terms first, then public relations and media relations, crisis communications, reputation and brand, digital forensics, internal communications, digital and social media terms, and finally the everyday agency and business language you will hear from any communications partner, including us.

Keep it nearby. Use it as a reference, not a book you read cover to cover in one sitting.

With clarity,
The UNCOM Media Team

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Foundational Communications Terms

The core vocabulary underneath every other section in this guide.

Corporate Communications

The function within an organization responsible for managing how it communicates with every audience it has: employees, customers, media, investors, and the public. It covers everything from internal memos to press statements.

Strategic Communications

Communication that is planned in advance and tied directly to an organization's broader goals, rather than reactive messaging created on the fly.

Stakeholder

Anyone with a genuine interest in what your organization does: employees, customers, investors, regulators, media, and the community. Different stakeholders often need different messages about the same event.

Key Message

The one or two core points you want an audience to remember, even if they forget everything else you said. Good communication is built around a small number of key messages, repeated consistently.

Talking Points

Short, prepared statements that support a key message, used to keep spokespeople consistent and on message across interviews, meetings, or public appearances.

Narrative

The larger story your organization tells over time, made up of many individual messages. A strong narrative gives context to a single announcement or event.

Audience Segmentation

The practice of dividing your total audience into smaller groups based on what they care about, so messaging can be tailored rather than one-size-fits-all.

Positioning Statement

A short, internal statement defining how your organization wants to be perceived relative to competitors or alternatives. It shapes messaging without necessarily being said publicly in those exact words.

SECTION 02

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations and Media Relations

The language of earning coverage and working with journalists.

Public Relations (PR)

The practice of managing how an organization is perceived by the public, primarily through earned coverage, relationships, and reputation, rather than paid advertising.

Media Relations

The specific discipline of building and maintaining relationships with journalists, editors, and outlets. It is one part of the broader public relations function.

Press Release

A written announcement distributed to media outlets to share news about an organization. Its effectiveness today depends heavily on the relationships behind it, not the document itself.

Media Pitch

A short, personalized message sent to a specific journalist explaining why a story matters to their audience, meant to earn coverage rather than simply announce news.

Embargo

An agreement that a journalist will hold a story until a specified date and time, in exchange for early access to information.

Beat

The specific topic or industry a journalist regularly covers, such as healthcare, technology, or local government. Knowing a reporter's beat is essential before reaching out to them.

Byline

The line crediting the author of an article. Reviewing bylines over time is one of the easiest ways to identify which reporters actually cover your industry.

Earned, Owned, and Paid Media

The three categories of media exposure: earned media is coverage you did not pay for, such as a news article; owned media is anything you control directly, like your website; paid media is advertising.

Crisis Communications and Crisis Management

The vocabulary you hope you rarely need, and absolutely need to know when you do.

Crisis Communications

The practice of communicating clearly and quickly with the public, employees, and media during an event that threatens an organization's reputation, operations, or safety.

Crisis Management

The broader organizational response to a crisis, including operational and legal decisions, of which crisis communications is one critical part.

Issue Management

The practice of identifying and addressing a potential problem before it escalates into a full crisis. Good issue management often prevents the need for crisis communications entirely.

Holding Statement

A brief, factual statement released quickly during a developing situation, used to acknowledge awareness while more information is gathered, without speculating or overcommitting.

Crisis Communication Plan

A pre-written document outlining roles, approval processes, key contacts, and messaging templates, so an organization is not building its response from scratch in the middle of an actual crisis.

Spokesperson

The designated individual authorized to speak publicly on behalf of an organization, particularly during sensitive situations, chosen for both authority and communication skill.

Reputational Risk

The potential for an event, decision, or piece of information to damage how an organization is perceived, independent of any financial or legal risk involved.

After-Action Review

A structured review conducted after a crisis or major event to evaluate what worked, what did not, and what should change before the next one.

Reputation and Brand

How organizations are perceived, and how that perception is tracked.

Online Reputation Management (ORM)

The ongoing practice of monitoring, influencing, and responding to how an organization appears online, across reviews, search results, social media, and news coverage.

Sentiment Score

A single number summarizing whether online conversation about a brand is positive, negative, or neutral, typically calculated from the ratio of positive to negative mentions.

Brand Equity

The added value a brand name provides beyond the functional product or service itself, built up over time through consistent experience and reputation.

Brand Standards

The documented rules governing how a brand's logo, colors, typography, voice, and visual identity should be used, meant to keep the brand consistent across every touchpoint.

Brand Voice

The distinct personality and tone an organization uses consistently across its written and spoken communication, whether formal, conversational, technical, or otherwise.

Share of Voice

The percentage of total conversation in your industry or category that is about your organization, compared to your competitors.

Reputational Capital

The accumulated trust and goodwill an organization has built over time, which can be drawn on during a difficult moment much like a financial reserve.

Trust Deficit

A gap between how much an audience trusts an organization and how much trust that organization actually needs to operate effectively or recover from a setback.

Digital Forensics and Online Investigation

The discipline of establishing facts before responding publicly.

Digital Forensics

The practice of analyzing digital evidence, communication timelines, online activity, and publicly available information to establish an accurate, factual account of what actually happened.

Digital Footprint

The trail of data a person or organization leaves behind through online activity, including posts, comments, metadata, and search history.

Metadata

Hidden data attached to a file, such as when a photo was taken, what device created it, or when a document was last edited. Metadata is often key evidence in verifying whether something is authentic.

Chain of Custody

The documented, unbroken record of who has handled a piece of evidence and when, used to establish that it has not been altered or tampered with.

OSINT (Open Source Intelligence)

Information gathered from publicly available sources, such as social media, public records, and news archives, used to build a factual picture without any private or confidential access.

Timeline Reconstruction

The process of piecing together the exact sequence of events, often using timestamps, posts, and communications, to understand what happened and in what order.

Deepfake

Synthetic audio, video, or image content generated or altered using artificial intelligence to convincingly show something that did not actually happen.

Data Provenance

The verified origin and history of a piece of digital content, used to determine whether it is authentic, altered, or taken out of its original context.

SECTION 06

INTERNAL

Internal Communications

The language of keeping an organization aligned from the inside.

Internal Communications

The function responsible for how information flows within an organization, between leadership, departments, and employees.

Change Management Communications

Communication specifically designed to help employees understand, accept, and adapt to a significant organizational change, such as a new system, process, or restructuring.

Employee Engagement

The degree to which employees feel connected to, informed about, and invested in the organization they work for, often influenced heavily by internal communication quality.

Town Hall Meeting

A large, often company-wide meeting where leadership shares updates and takes questions directly from employees.

Cascade Communication

A method of sharing information where leadership briefs managers, who then relay the message to their own teams, intended to keep messaging consistent as it spreads.

Feedback Loop

A built-in process for collecting reactions and results after a change or announcement, so leadership actually learns whether the communication worked.

Communication Audit

A structured review of an organization's internal communication channels and practices, used to identify gaps, silos, or inconsistencies.

Organizational Silo

A department or team that operates in isolation from the rest of the organization, often resulting in inconsistent information, duplicated effort, or missed coordination.

Digital and Social Media Communications

The metrics and mechanics behind modern audience communication.

Engagement Rate

The percentage of people who interacted with a piece of content, such as liking, commenting, or sharing, relative to how many people saw it.

Impressions vs. Reach

Impressions count every time content is displayed, including repeat views by the same person. Reach counts only the unique number of people who saw it at least once.

Algorithm

The set of rules a platform uses to decide what content gets shown to which users, and in what order, directly affecting how far a message travels organically.

Social Listening

The practice of monitoring social media and online conversation for mentions of a brand, industry, or topic, used to understand sentiment and emerging issues.

Community Management

The ongoing work of responding to comments, messages, and engagement on an organization's social channels, distinct from creating the content itself.

User-Generated Content (UGC)

Content created by customers or audience members rather than the organization itself, such as reviews, photos, or social posts, often carrying more perceived authenticity than branded content.

Content Calendar

A planned schedule of what content will be published, where, and when, used to keep messaging consistent and organized across channels.

Amplification

The practice of extending the reach of a message beyond its original audience, whether through paid promotion, shares, or influencer and ally support.

Agency, Engagement, and Business Terms

The everyday language you will hear from any communications partner, including us.

Engagement Manager

The primary point of contact responsible for managing the day-to-day relationship between an agency or consultant and a client, ensuring work stays on track and aligned with the client's goals.

Account Executive

The team member typically responsible for day-to-day client communication and coordination, often working underneath an account or engagement lead on larger accounts.

Scope of Work (SOW)

A document outlining exactly what work will be performed, by whom, on what timeline, and for what cost, used to set clear expectations before a project begins.

Retainer

An ongoing fee arrangement in which a client pays a set amount, usually monthly, for a defined amount of continuing work or availability, rather than paying per individual project.

Deliverable

A specific, tangible output of a project, such as a press release, a report, or a completed campaign, that can be reviewed and considered complete.

RFP (Request for Proposal)

A formal document an organization sends to potential vendors or agencies, describing a project and inviting them to submit a proposal for the work.

KPI (Key Performance Indicator)

A specific, measurable value used to evaluate whether a communications effort is succeeding, such as media mentions, sentiment score, or engagement rate.

Creative Brief

A short document outlining the goals, audience, key message, and constraints of a project, used to align everyone involved before creative work begins.

SECTION 09

QUICK REFERENCE

Quick-Reference Acronym Cheat Sheet

The shorthand you will see most often, all in one place.

ACRONYM	STANDS FOR
PR	Public Relations
ORM	Online Reputation Management
SOW	Scope of Work
RFP	Request for Proposal
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
UGC	User-Generated Content
SOV	Share of Voice
B2B / B2C	Business-to-Business / Business-to-Consumer
CMS	Content Management System

A FINAL NOTE

Knowing the language is not the same as knowing what to do with it. That is where experience, judgment, and the right team come in.

YOU KNOW THE LANGUAGE NOW

Let's Put It To Work.

A glossary can help you follow the conversation. Leading it, whether that means building your brand, protecting your reputation, or navigating a crisis, is where UNCOM Media's communications work comes in.

[SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION](#)

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