

Your Guide to the Future of Financial Services Marketing Communications

EXPLORE FIVE TRENDS RESHAPING HOW FINANCIAL
SERVICES FIRMS MARKET THEIR OFFERINGS

Financial services marketers and communicators are facing a challenging landscape in the back half of 2024. Market volatility demands more agile communication strategies. Economic headwinds are leading finance executives to tighten their belts—including marketing-related budgets. Stakeholders require more reassurance around the return on their investments, sometimes before they put their dollars to work. In response, financial services marketing and communications professionals must make use of cutting-edge tools and intelligence to ensure their campaigns resonate with end audiences.

From powering earned media efforts with data analytics to capitalizing on the growth of ABM strategies, this guide outlines the emerging themes that will define financial services marketing communications in the coming months. [Explore our practical steps for applying these themes to your marcomm strategy.](#)

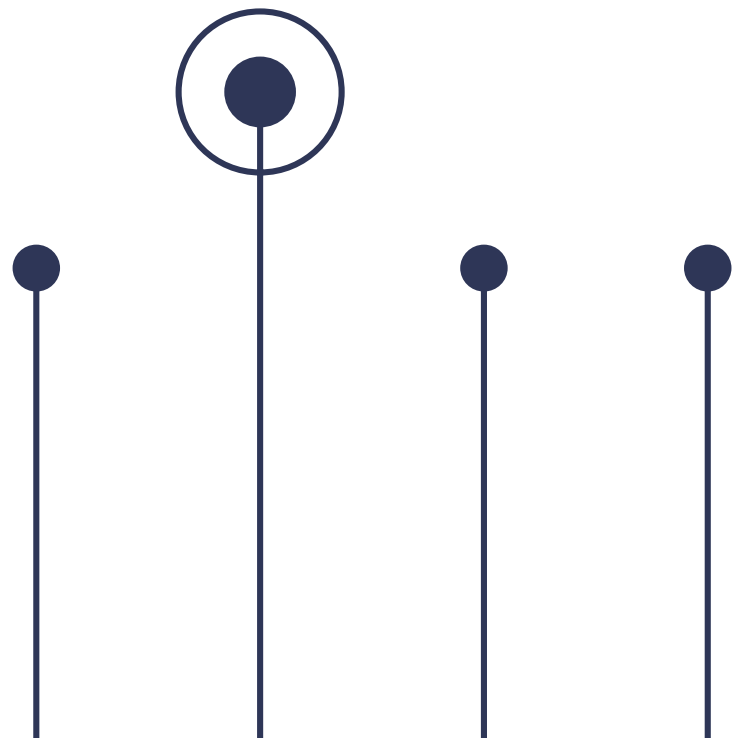


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Social media is quickly catching up to Google as a powerful search tool.

● **ABM adoption accelerates:**

Account based marketing strategies help financial services companies use resources more efficiently and fill their organization's sales pipeline.

● **Analytics enhance earned media:**

Relationships remain key to successfully engaging reporters, but analytics are the true differentiator.

● **Politicization of ESG complicates communication:**

Communicators must navigate how to present business priorities and commitments amid the anti-ESG movement.

GENERATIVE AI CHANGES THE GAME

Leveraging generative AI is becoming table stakes across the financial services ecosystem. Private equity firms are using it to analyze market trends, financial advisors are using it to automate administrative tasks and banks are using it to enhance the customer experience.

For now, identifying intentional use cases for testing and learning will be valuable as marketing and communications leaders balance strategy with tactical efficiency. For example, the use of GenAI to simply create content without guardrails can lead to a high quantity of content, but a sacrifice in the quality. Being strategic with use cases, private sandboxes and internal standards will be key to effectively scaling an AI strategy.

REPRESENT MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS WITH A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Much of the generative AI and machine learning conversations at financial services organizations will take place with a small subset of stakeholders beyond the technology team. Making a seat at the table for marketing & communications can create value in several ways: understanding of potential risks that could arise both internally and externally, ability to identify storylines from successful use cases across the enterprise, and support in establishing intentional use cases for marcomm, especially as regulations and guardrails evolve for financial institutions.

ENSURE GOVERNANCE IS IN PLACE

Generative AI and machine learning will drive more innovation in the next year than had been achieved in the last 10. However, these tools will also be a focus of regulators and compliance teams as they gauge whether scaling should happen so quickly.

Financial institutions must implement the right governance to mitigate risks and make changes seamlessly should an AI model need to be addressed. For communicators, this is especially vital as organizations look to avoid technology and security issues and potential reputational implications.



- **Think about the role of AI-generated content across your team.** While generative AI won't — and shouldn't — replace your best writer or graphic designer, it can help generate thought-starters and accelerate the creative process.
- **Leverage generative AI as a research assistant.** Savvy marketers can stay up to speed on new topics and be proactive when it comes to ideation with the help of AI.
- **Consider specialized GPTs.** GPTs designed to do one thing really well— e.g., draft a Facebook post or analyze survey data — will outperform the generalists.
- **Determine AI ethical standards.** Make sure your team understands expectations when it comes to disclosing AI use, gut-checking that AI-driven work isn't amplifying existing biases and ensuring information being shared is accurate and not a falsehood perpetuated by an algorithm.

SEARCH GOES SOCIAL

Search engines remain the preferred tool when looking for answers online, but social media is quickly gaining popularity — 31% of consumers use social media to answer their questions.¹

More and more retail investors are turning to social media sites like YouTube, TikTok and Reddit to find financial advice and potential investments. The subreddit r/WallStreetBets is one of the most well-known sources of information for DIY investors after it drove meme stock mania for GameStop, AMC Entertainment Holdings and Blackberry Limited.

But do investors trust and act on this information? Yes — a sizeable 39% of investors say they've listened to financial advice found on social media.²

As social media displaces Google as a preferred search engine, you can tap into its potential in several ways:

- **Social media algorithms reward high-value educational content.** Accompanying visual assets are also preferred by algorithms as they increase shareability and engagement.
- **Authenticity is key to being trusted on social media.** Don't participate in trends because they are popular. Instead, participate in conversations most relevant to the brand.
- **Do not set a goal of going viral.** Prioritize connections with target audiences, influencers with relevant followings or active, niche communities. Going viral is not a win if your message does not reach the right audience.
- **Community-driven recommendations are trusted sources for reviews and advice.** Leverage these platforms for brand research — listening to how people are talking about you and your competitors.

TIKTOK IS TOP FOR GEN Z SEARCH

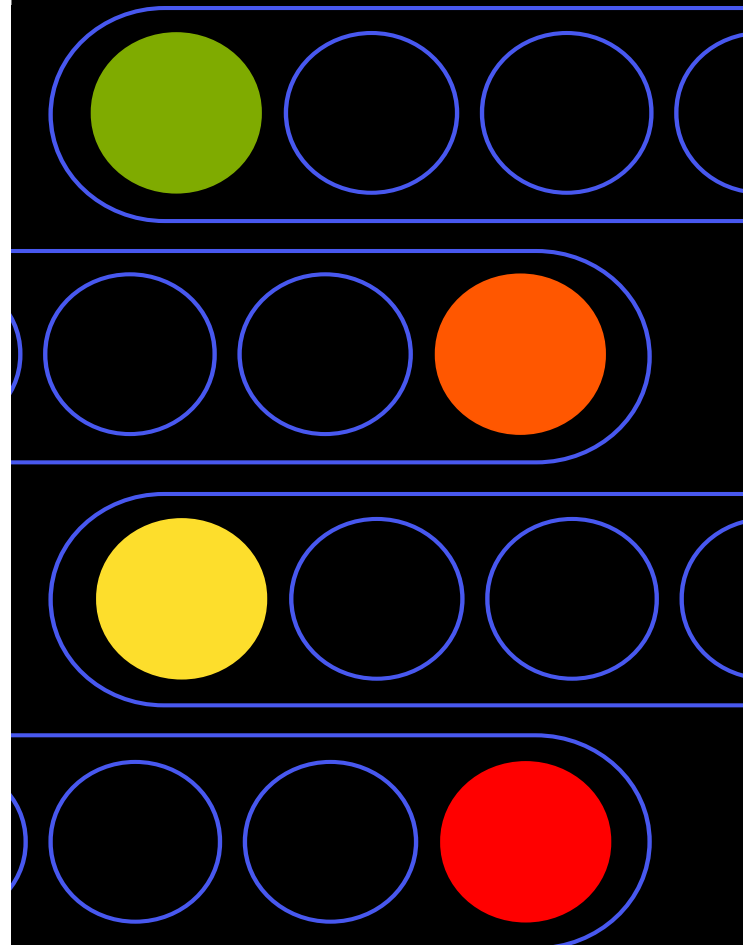
Brands looking to engage with younger audiences should consider TikTok—21% of adults aged 18-24 begin searching for information on that channel.³

TikTok's visual and bite-sized content makes it easily digestible for users. Additionally, TikTok's algorithm, trending challenges and hashtags make it easy for users to find what they're looking for.

41% of consumers have used TikTok for search

64% of Gen Z have used TikTok for search

49% of Millennials have used TikTok for search⁴

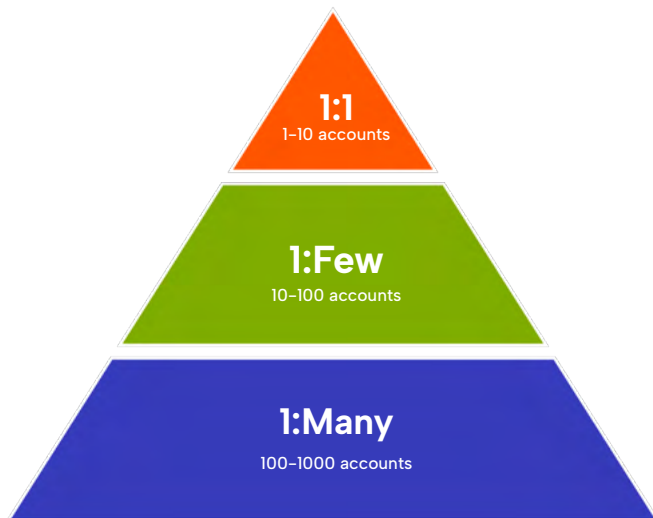


ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING ADOPTION ACCELERATES

What is Account Based Marketing?

Account-based marketing (ABM) takes an existing or prospective customer account and treats it like a market of one. Everything from the value proposition to the content assets to the distribution channels are customized to the target account.

Incorporating ABM into a marketing plan can help financial services companies use resources and budget more efficiently, improve client relationships with more personalized content and fill their organization's sales pipeline — all high priority goals for financial services C-Suite leaders during times of economic headwinds.



Importance of Technology



Potential Deal Value



Level of Personalization



Investment & ROI per Account

Which Type of ABM Makes Sense for My Company?

1:1: This strategic ABM approach creates a specific marketing plan for individual accounts with the highest revenue potential or customer lifetime value for your company.

1:Few: This ABM lite approach applies 1:1 ABM principles to clusters of accounts experiencing similar challenges, interests and needs.

1:Many: This programmatic ABM approach requires sophisticated use of technology to track intent signals and personalize at scale, and it is primarily used for lead generation within new accounts.

For financial services marketers pursuing ABM strategies, emerging data sources and artificial intelligence tools can make your campaigns more efficient and successful.

Intent Data: Intent data shows which accounts are "in-market" by detecting purchase behavior across online sources. Leveraging intent data can allow you to know which targets are already interested in the products and services your company is selling — and therefore are more likely to convert. From M&A advisory to annuities to commercial lending, there are numerous financial services intent signals to track and assess when building your ABM campaign.

Multi-Channel Personalization: Personalizing content and communications by simply inserting a prospect's name or company no longer qualifies as personalization. With intent data and AI solutions at our fingertips, messages and the buyer journey must be customized to each account across every digital touchpoint in order to maximize success. The language and content served up to one prospect may not make sense for another — even when selling the same product or service.

Generative AI: Generative AI has enabled marketers to deliver more 1:1 ABM campaigns with fewer resources by automating content customization. The best campaigns make use of AI tools to ensure the right messages are landing in the hands of the right prospects at the right time.

ANALYTICS ENHANCE EARNED MEDIA

The financial services media landscape is robust, with hundreds of outlets dedicated to its many industries.

Relationships have been and continue to be the key to successfully engaging reporters. To strengthen existing relationships or establish new ones, analytics can inform not only how you reach out to them, but also what stories and sources you should offer them.

How can you quickly capture attention?

80% of reporters read only the press release title.⁵

When should you reach out?

Wednesdays are the busiest news days.⁶

Who are your sources?

62% of reporters find CEOs to be credible sources, compared to 74% in 2021.⁷

What insights can you offer?

68% of journalists want to receive original research.

The Bliss Group analyzed a representative sample of 967 media pitches to understand what metrics guide a successful pitch. Key highlights of successful pitches that you could incorporate into your outreach efforts include:

- The average subject line character count of a successful pitch was 69 characters.
- 87.6% of successful pitches were less than 301 words and 38.9% had a word count between 101 and 201.
- The word “Executive” is used 40% more in successful pitches.
- The word “Research” is used 44.8% more in successful pitches.

Outlets Preferred by the C-Suite

Bliss analysis identified the top publications C-Suite members engaged with on LinkedIn

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Forbes | 6. TechCrunch |
| 2. Wall Street Journal | 7. Crain’s Chicago |
| 3. CNBC | 8. Business Journals |
| 4. New York Times | 9. Barron’s |
| 5. ImpactAlpha | 10. Fortune |

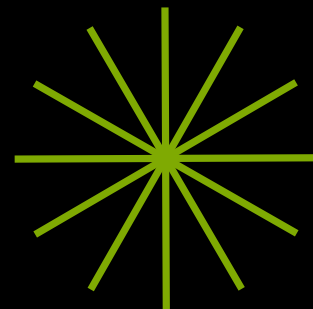
*Based on engagement January – October 2023

JOURNALISTS’ CONCERNS EXTEND BEYOND YOUR PITCH

When engaging reporters, remember that newsrooms are focused on life-threatening and life-altering circumstances.

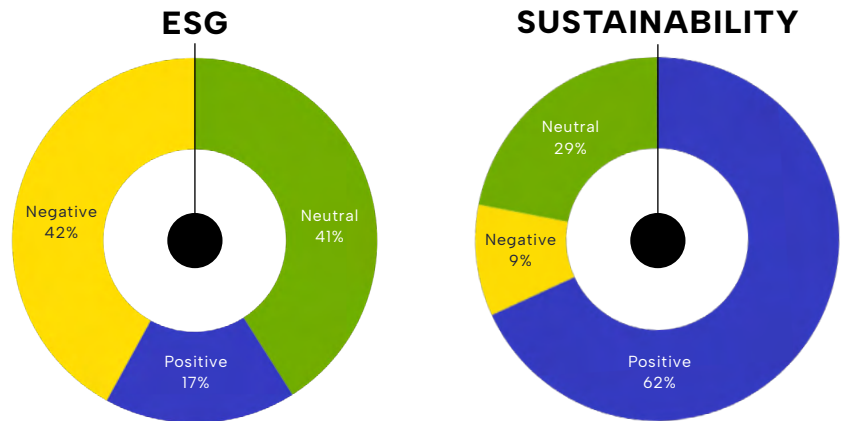
Physical safety. According to The Committee to Protect Journalists, 209 journalists and media workers were killed in the five-year period between 2019–2023.

Job security. There were 538 journalist layoffs in January 2024 alone. This is the largest report of layoffs since March 2023 when there were 528 layoffs across digital, broadcast and print media.⁸



POLITICIZATION OF ESG COMPLICATES COMMUNICATIONS

More than **1 in 4** consumers have a negative perception of businesses using the word **ESG**.⁹



Talkwalker Analysis for 10/30/2023–4/30/2023
Executives, Hr Pros & Lawyers Only, U.S. only

As the “anti-ESG” movement becomes more prominent, especially in an election year, business leaders need to balance their previously made commitments with the growing number of vocal detractors. This challenge often falls to communicators who must carefully frame messaging to stay focused on the organization’s goals and commitments without alienating audiences.

Consider your messaging wisely. “Sustainability” is now being used more frequently than “ESG” by businesses on social media. It is also being discussed more positively, making it a less polarizing dialogue than ESG. While the two aren’t 1:1 swaps, leaning into discussion around sustainability where possible can help businesses avoid backlash.

Reclaim the ESG narrative. When positioning your organization or a senior leader and the related messaging, be consistent and clear wherever possible — especially when it comes to ESG. Leverage established messages that are reinforced by routine media and communications, and provide messaging that is simple and relatable, using common terms and avoiding inflationary language. Proactively use milestones and timely topics to engage in ESG-relevant conversations with your audience to help ensure the right message is being used at the right time, with the right people. In today’s ESG environment, being strategic and planful in how, when and with whom messaging is shared will lead to stronger outcomes.



Bottom line: if you’re talking the talk, walk the walk. Make sure that if your leaders or organization message ESG goals, that updates are shared communicating the company’s progress. Being mindful in terms of messaging and transparent based on promises made to stakeholders will be critical to maintaining reputational matters related to ESG.

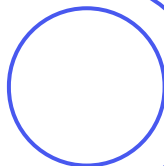
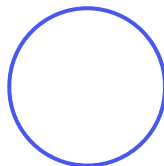
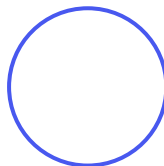
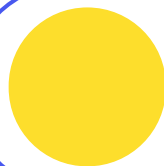
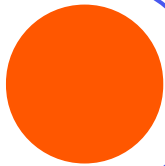
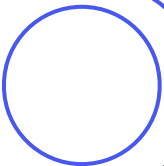
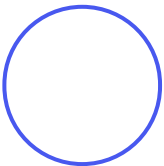
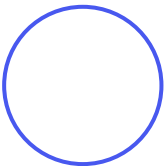
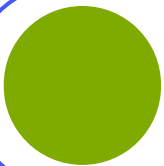
ABOUT THE BLISS GROUP

The Bliss Group is a marketing communications agency that blends data science with the art of storytelling to connect to people with precision, empathy and purpose.

We partner with clients to influence and amplify all the ways in which people can create, build, preserve and distribute wealth in today's economic environment. The Bliss Group specializes in building value for organizations across the financial services sector.

Powered by analytics and audience insights, we uncover truths and tell stories across mediums that inspire action and make an impact. Our cross-channel marketing communications approach is grounded in data, guided by our industry experience, and delivered with a deep commitment to excellence.

GET IN TOUCH



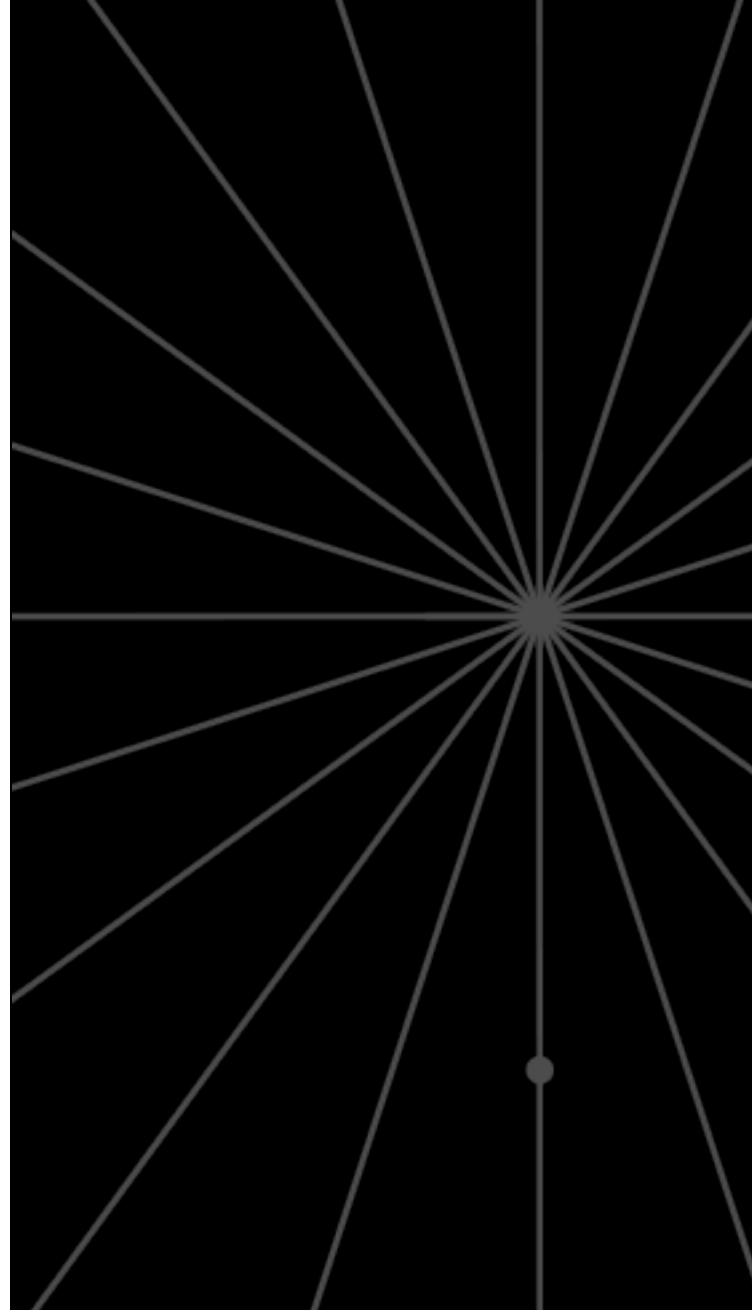
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ENDNOTES

- 1 Hubspot, [The State of Consumer Trends in 2023 \[Data from 600+ Consumers\]](#)
- 2 [Betterment Retail Investor Survey 2023: Assessing the “New Normal”](#)
- 3 [Axios, Google who? Gen Z is searching on TikTok, YouTube instead](#)
- 4 [Adobe Express, Using TikTok as a Search Engine](#)
- 5 [Cision’s 2023 State of the Media](#)
- 6 [Memo’s State of Media & Readership Report 2023](#)
- 7 [MuckRack’s State of Journalism 2023](#)
- 8 [Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Job Cuts Announced By US-Based Companies Surge 136% to 82,307 to Begin 2024; Financial, Tech Lead](#)
- 9 [Stagwell & The Harris Poll, WHAT THE DATA SAY: 1 in 4 Americans find the acronyms DEI and ESG politically polarizing](#)

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