

# Future-Proofing Communications in an Age of Complexity: Lessons from Bosch Global Leaders

In a world shaped by AI, geopolitical uncertainty, fragmented audiences and rising stakeholder expectations, corporate communications is undergoing a profound transformation. At The Listening Circle, hosted by the Public Relations Consultants Association of India (PRCAI) in collaboration with Bosch on June 23, 2026, two senior Bosch communicators offered a candid look at what it will take for the profession to stay relevant. Professor Dr. Christof Ehrhart, Executive Vice President – Corporate Communications & Governmental Affairs, Robert Bosch Group and Jay Jiang, Vice President, Corporate Communications and Government Affairs, Bosch China and Asia Pacific, shared their perspectives in a session moderated by Sowmya Prabhakar, Chief Operating Officer, The Takshashila Institution.

The defining message of the conversation was that even as AI reshapes how communications teams operate, the discipline itself remains fundamentally human. "Communications is human-native, it was, it is, and it will be," Ehrhart said. AI can drive efficiency, but the real value communicators bring, context, trust, human connection, and a steady hand through uncertainty, is not something a tool can replicate.

That conviction sits against a backdrop of real change. Today's communications leaders are navigating three shifts at once: rapid technological advancement, shifting geopolitical realities, and rising societal expectations of business. Together, these forces have pushed communications out of a purely supporting role and into a genuine strategic capability. The brief leadership hands to communicators has changed accordingly; it's no longer just messaging support, but interpretation. Leaders increasingly want their communications teams to make sense of complex developments, test assumptions, and help set direction. In an environment saturated with information, communicators are becoming organizational navigators, helping businesses understand not only what is happening, but what it actually means for them.

Ehrhart was direct about where human value sits in an AI-enabled world. AI can produce content instantly, but it cannot replace critical thinking, curiosity, or contextual judgment. The communicators who matter most in the years ahead, he argued, won't be defined by which tools they've mastered, but by how deeply they understand the social, political, economic, and cultural forces shaping their organizations.

Jiang brought a regional lens to the conversation, describing how dramatically the media landscape has shifted. Traditional channels have given way to a fragmented ecosystem of social platforms, influencers, creators, and live-streaming communities. Reaching audiences now means personalized engagement at scale, often powered by AI, and the real challenge has moved from creating content to earning attention in an increasingly crowded space.

Both leaders also pointed to geopolitics as a growing factor in business decision-making. As organizations operate across differing regulatory environments and national priorities, communications teams are being asked to do two things at once: maintain global consistency while staying locally relevant, and help leadership anticipate risks and stakeholder expectations before they surface.

The session's most resonant idea came from Ehrhart's reference to the "Third Man Factor" the unseen presence that explorers and survivors have described as a companion that helps people endure extreme

uncertainty. He suggested communicators should aim to play a similar role inside their organizations: offering perspective, reassurance, and direction precisely when complexity is at its highest.

Technology, media, and global dynamics will keep evolving, but one thing won't change. Organizations will continue to rely on trusted communicators who can interpret complexity, build trust, and bring clarity to ambiguity. As Ehrhart and Jiang both made clear, the future of the profession doesn't belong to those who master every new tool first. It belongs to those who pair human judgment and strategic thinking with authentic communication and use that combination to help organizations find their way forward.

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