



Who Controls Trust in the Age of AI?

How should organizations communicate when AI capability is accelerating, geopolitical complexity is rising, and institutional trust is becoming more fragile?

This question anchored The Listening Circle, hosted by PRCAI in collaboration with U.S. India Business Council on 17 February 2026 on the onset of the India AI Summit 2026. PRCAI convened senior communications, policy, legal, and business leaders for a closed-door discussion, featuring insights from Jay Gullish, Executive Director, Digital Policy, USIBC, a visiting delegate, who highlighted several structural shifts reshaping the communications and policy mandate. Moderated by Abhishek Malhotra of TMT Law Practice, the exchange reinforced a clear takeaway: Reputation is strategic capital in the era of AI, and safeguarding trust demands collaboration across sectors.

Summarising some of the conversation highlights:

1. Fragmented operating environments

Data sovereignty requirements, regulatory divergence, and geopolitical pressures are creating multiple compliance and perception contexts across markets. Organizations can no longer rely on uniform global narratives or centralized messaging architectures. Communication strategies must increasingly be modular, market-specific, and policy-aware, with closer alignment between corporate affairs, legal, and public policy functions.

2. AI as operational leverage, not replacement

AI is compressing research cycles, enabling faster content development, improving stakeholder intelligence, and supporting scenario planning. However, it also introduces new risk vectors including factual inaccuracies, tone misalignment, hallucinations, and uncontrolled dissemination at scale. Internal governance frameworks, human oversight models, and clear accountability for AI-assisted outputs are becoming as critical as editorial standards.

3. Trust moving from narrative to systems

Stakeholders are evaluating credibility less through messaging and more through institutional behaviour: data protection practices, cybersecurity resilience, algorithmic accountability, and transparency in decision-making. Reputation is increasingly inseparable from organizational architecture and operational discipline.

A useful lens discussed was the concept of “zero trust” from cybersecurity where credibility must be continuously validated rather than assumed. For communications leaders, this implies a shift from persuasion toward verification, evidence, and demonstrable integrity.

“We are moving from an environment where trust was assumed to one where it must be deliberately designed. AI will continue to accelerate capability, but it also increases

exposure. The real differentiator will not be how quickly organizations deploy these tools, but how effectively they govern them and build credibility into their systems,” said **Jay Gullish, Executive Director, Digital Policy, USIBC.**

The implication is straightforward. Communications is no longer peripheral to decision-making. It is becoming part of how organizations manage technology, risk, and policy. Its strategic value will depend on how well it is embedded across these areas.