

Strategic Advocacy Outlook 2026

Strategic Influence, Institutional Trust and the Future of Advocacy

Institutions today operate in an environment where influence is shaped by fragmented trust, competing narratives and rapidly evolving digital information systems.

Strategic advocacy increasingly requires the ability to engage across policy ecosystems, institutional networks and distributed influence communities.

Context: Misinformation and disinformation rank among the top global risks in the next two years, according to the World Economic Forum Global Risks Report.

Five Structural Shifts Shaping Advocacy

Strategic advocacy is being reshaped by structural changes in the global information environment.

Fragmentation of trust

Audiences rely on different validators including institutions, experts and digital personalities.

Rise of narrative competition

Policy debates increasingly unfold through competing interpretations of events.

Platform-driven information ecosystems

Digital platforms now act as primary gateways for news and commentary.

Expansion of influence actors

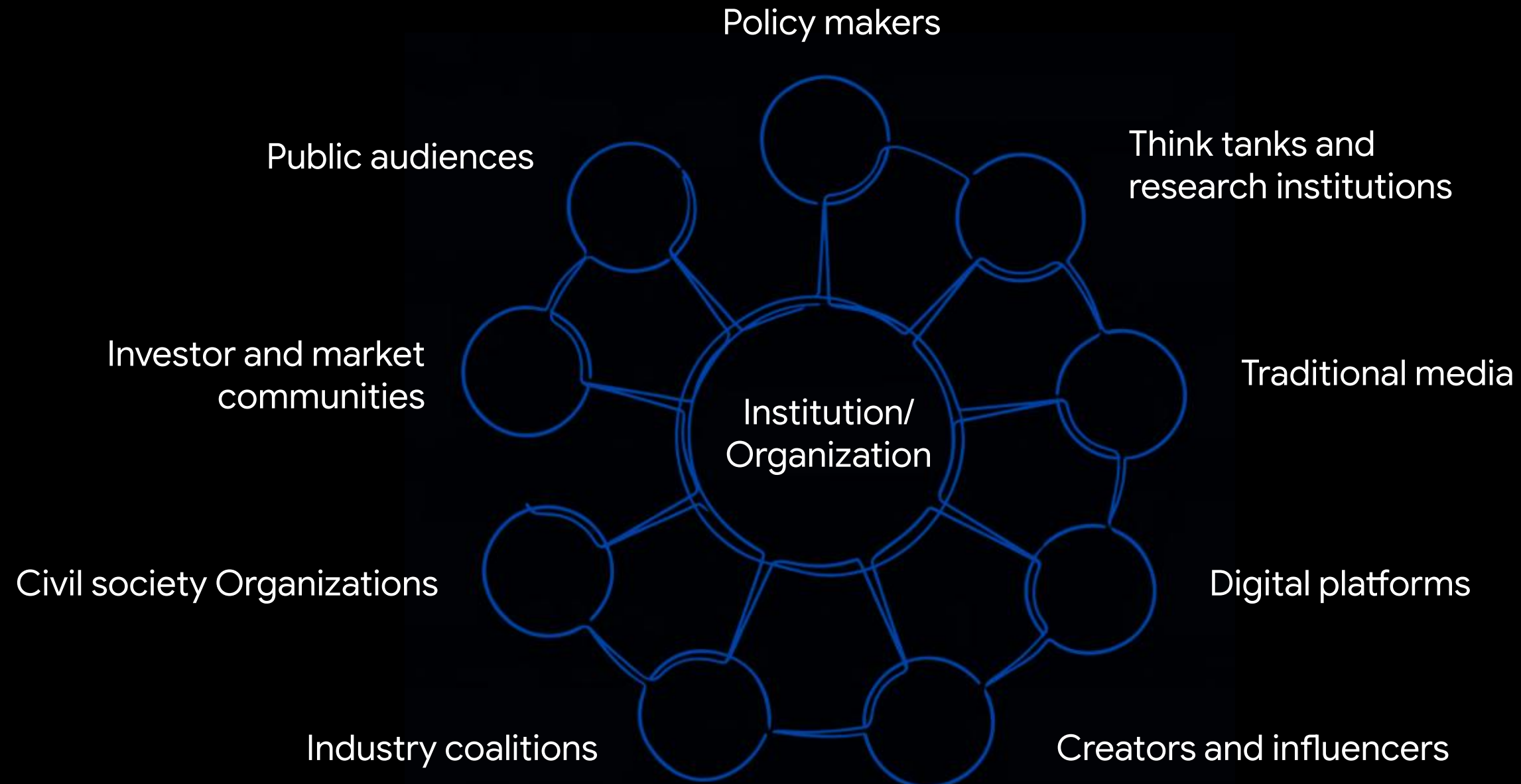
Creators, commentators and niche experts shape public discourse.

Information integrity risks

Misinformation, manipulation and AI-generated media complicate credibility.

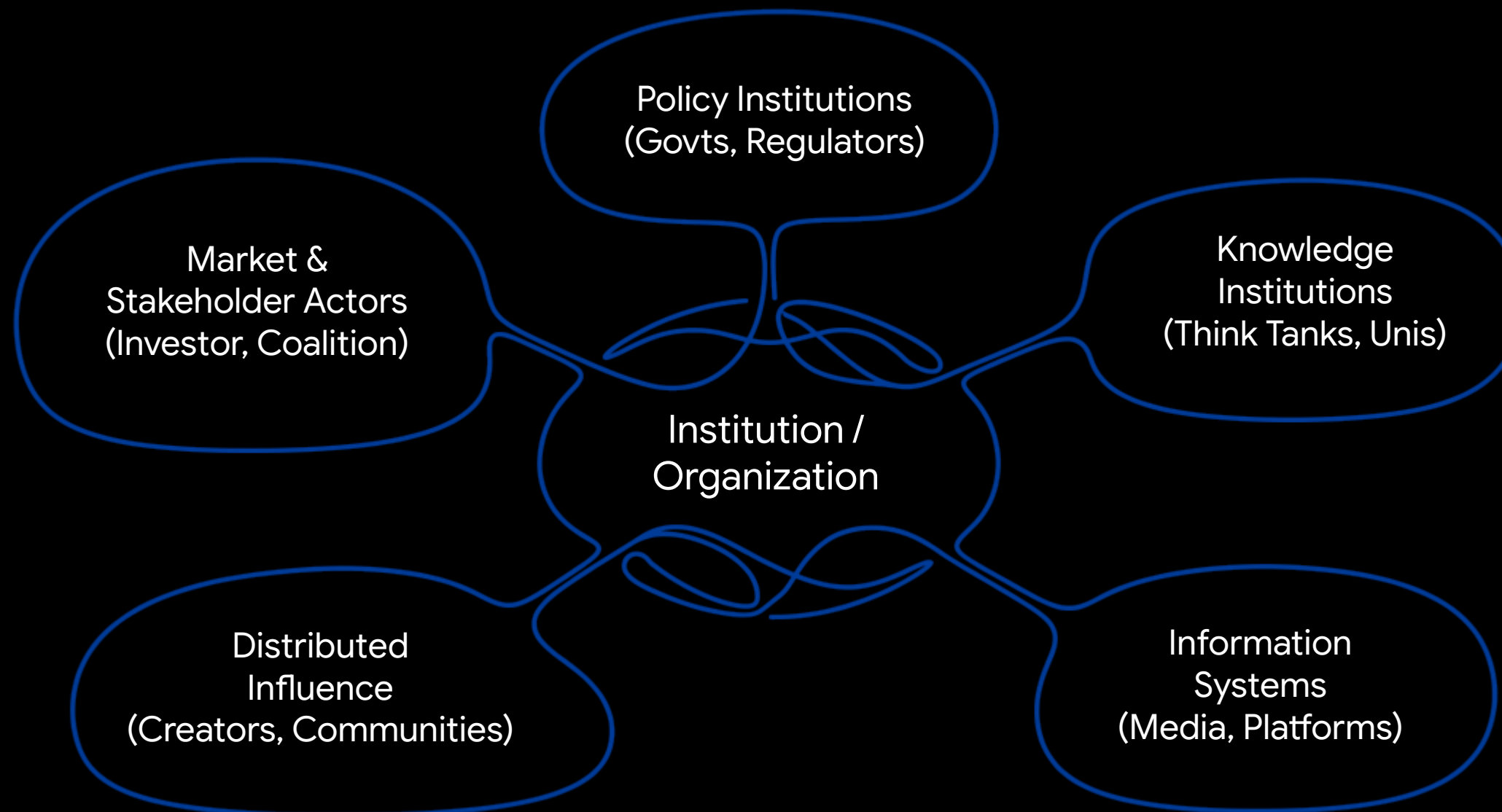
How Influence Works Today

Influence flows through interconnected networks rather than a single public sphere.



The Global Influence Map 2026

Influence is now produced through interaction across policy systems, knowledge networks and digital ecosystems. Strategic advocacy must therefore operate across all three simultaneously.



The Changing Information Landscape

Digital platforms have transformed how audiences access information and form opinions.

News consumption increasingly occurs through online platforms and algorithmic feeds rather than institutional channels.

40%

Global trust in news

According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report.

44%

Ages 18–24 on social/video

Say social media or video platforms are their primary source of news.



Trust Is Fragmented, Not Uniform

The challenge for institutions is not simply declining trust but fragmented trust.

Different audiences rely on different credibility networks including institutions, experts, communities and digital personalities.

Advocacy strategies must therefore reflect multiple trust ecosystems.

Key data

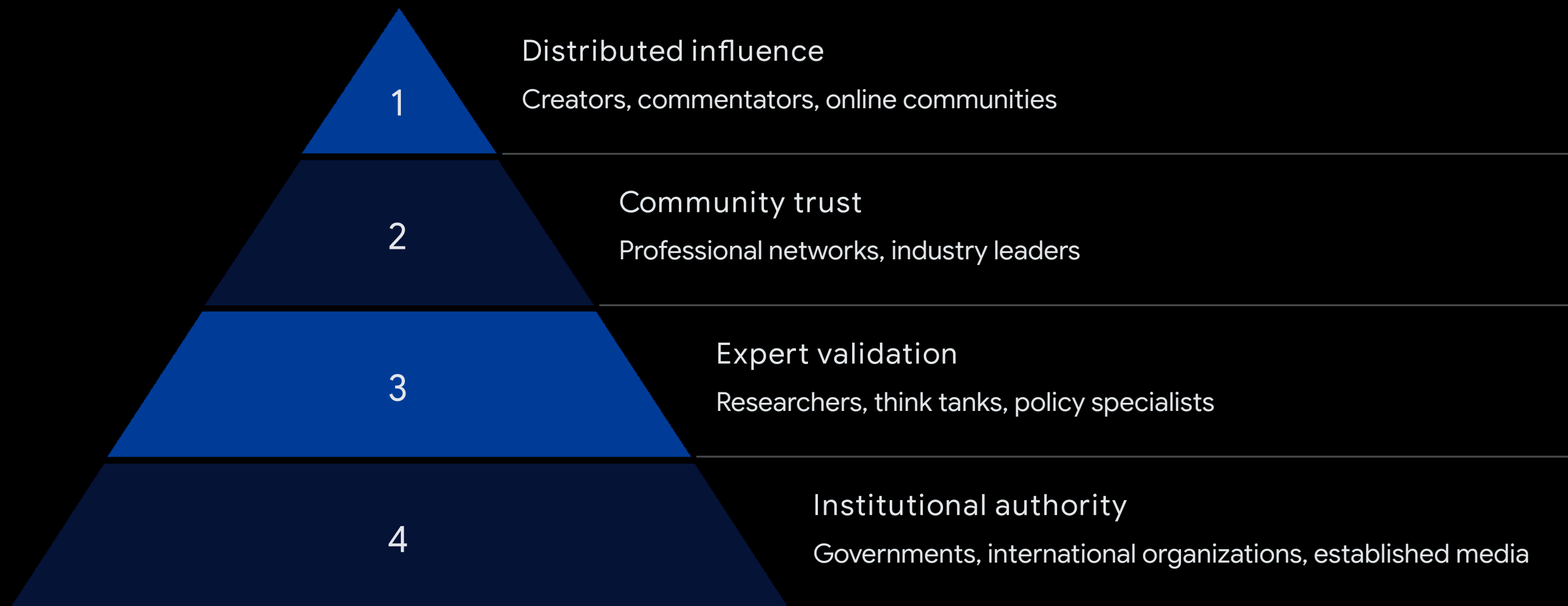
According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, 70% of respondents worry that leaders in government, business or media deliberately mislead people.

What this means for advocacy

Institutions cannot rely on a single credibility signal. Strategies must be designed to resonate across multiple, distinct trust ecosystems simultaneously.

The Fragmented Trust Landscape

Trust now emerges from multiple overlapping credibility networks.



Narrative Competition Is Increasing

Public debates increasingly unfold through competing narratives rather than shared factual baselines.

Narratives shape how issues are interpreted by regulators, investors and the public.

Strategic advocacy must therefore manage narrative environments as well as policy engagement.



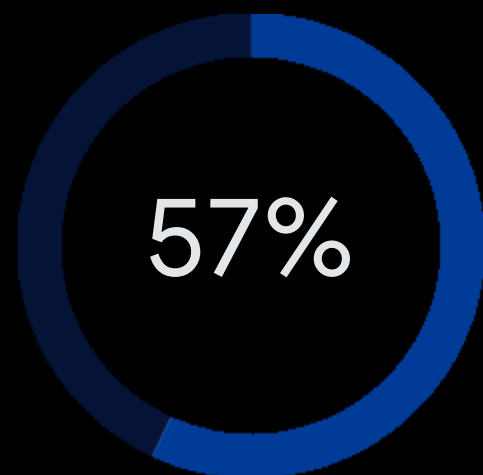
***Key data:** The World Economic Forum Global Risks Report identifies misinformation and disinformation among the most significant global risks.*



Influence Is Moving Toward Personalities

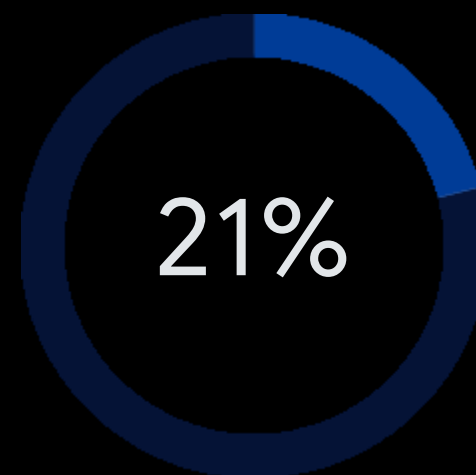
Digital personalities increasingly shape how audiences interpret news, policy issues and corporate developments.

Influencers, commentators and domain specialists can reach audiences faster than traditional institutions.



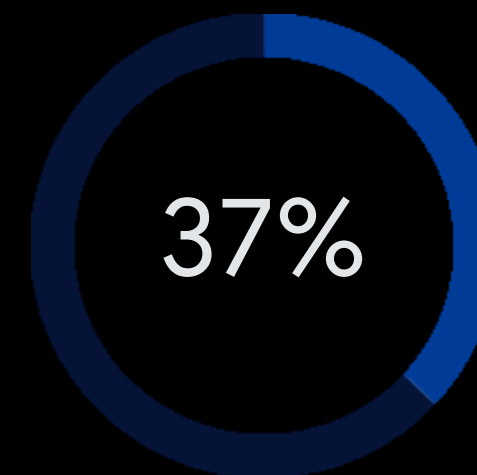
TikTok news users

Follow influencers or personalities, per Reuters Institute research.



U.S. adults

Regularly get news from social media influencers, per Pew Research Center.



Ages 18–29

Among people aged 18–29 who regularly get news from social media influencers.

The Creator Economy Is Part of the Influence System

Creators now participate in discussions around policy, geopolitics and corporate activity.

However, these networks often operate outside traditional editorial standards.

Key data

A UNESCO global survey found 62% of digital creators do not consistently verify information before sharing it.

Strategic implication

Institutions engaging with creator networks must account for the absence of editorial gatekeeping and build verification and credibility signals into their outreach strategies.

However, these networks often operate outside traditional editorial standards.



Information Integrity Is Becoming Harder to Maintain

Algorithm-driven content distribution and emerging AI-generated media increase uncertainty around information authenticity.

Institutions must therefore strengthen monitoring, verification and analytical capabilities.

59%

Concerned about real vs. fake

Global audiences concerned about what is real or fake online, per the Reuters Institute Digital News Report.



The Information Risk Spectrum

Institutions must distinguish between organic narrative pressure and coordinated information manipulation in order to respond effectively.

1

Information Noise

High volume of conflicting information. Unverified commentary. Fragmented discourse.

2

Narrative Distortion

Selective framing of facts. Polarized interpretations. Agenda-driven commentary.

3

Coordinated Narrative Pressure

Organized campaigns. Reputational targeting. Strategic amplification.

4

Disinformation Operations

False or manipulated content. Deliberate attempts to mislead audiences.

LOW NARRATIVE RISK → HIGH NARRATIVE RISK

The Expanding Influence Arena

Policy debates increasingly unfold across digital platforms, expert communities and international information networks.

Influence is shaped by decentralized actors and global narrative flows.

Strategic advocacy must therefore engage multiple arenas simultaneously.



Digital Platforms

Policy debates now play out in real time across social media, video platforms and algorithmic content feeds.



Expert Communities

Think tanks, researchers and policy specialists shape the evidence base that underpins regulatory and legislative decisions.



International Information Networks

Narrative flows cross borders rapidly, requiring institutions to monitor and engage globally.



Institutional Credibility Is Strategic Capital

In fragmented information environments, credibility functions as a strategic asset.

Organizations with trusted relationships across expert communities and policy networks are better positioned to maintain influence.

Research from the OECD on information integrity highlights the importance of trusted intermediaries in strengthening public discourse

Expert Communities

Trusted relationships with researchers and think tanks anchor credibility in evidence.

Policy Networks

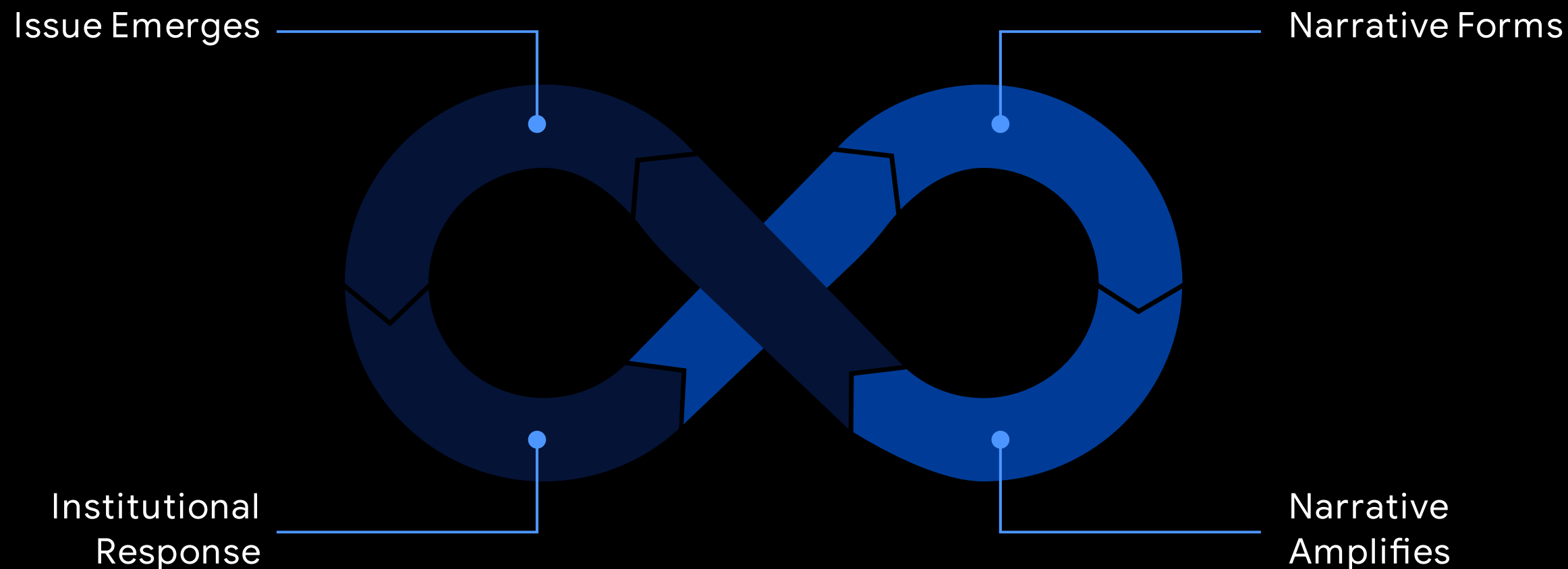
Access to regulatory and legislative ecosystems enables early and sustained engagement.

Trusted Intermediaries

Per OECD research, intermediaries play a critical role in strengthening public discourse.

The Global Influence Cycle

Organizations that intervene earlier in the influence cycle are better positioned to shape outcomes.



Understanding where an organization sits within this cycle at any given moment is essential to determining the right advocacy intervention — whether that means shaping narratives early or responding to coordinated pressure later.

Advocacy Is Moving Upstream

Strategic advocacy increasingly begins before policy debates become polarized. Early engagement helps anchor debates in evidence before narratives become polarized.



Policy research partnerships

Collaborating with research institutions to build an evidence base ahead of regulatory cycles.



Think tank collaboration

Engaging policy specialists to shape the intellectual framing of emerging issues.



Expert briefings

Providing credible, evidence-based perspectives to key decision-makers before debates polarize.



Institutional dialogue

Building sustained relationships with regulators, legislators and multilateral bodies.



Strategic Advocacy Framework

Effective strategic influence requires the simultaneous alignment of three interconnected capabilities.

Policy Engagement

- Government relations
- Regulatory strategy
- Policy intelligence

Institutional Outreach

- Think tanks
- Research institutions
- Expert networks
- Coalition building

Information Integrity

- Narrative monitoring
- Counter-disinformation
- Digital investigation
- Reputation defense

 Center: Strategic Influence — the convergence of all three pillars.

The Strategic Advocacy Operating Model

Sustainable influence requires aligning policy access, institutional credibility and narrative resilience.

Policy Engagement

- Government relations
- Legislative intelligence
- Regulatory monitoring

Institutional Outreach

- Think tanks
- Research institutions
- Expert communities
- Coalition partners

Information Integrity

- Narrative monitoring
- Disinformation response
- Digital investigation
- Reputation resilience

Foundation: Strategic Intelligence

Stakeholder mapping · Narrative analysis · Policy ecosystem insight

The Commcorde Perspective

Commcorde works with corporations, governments and public institutions navigating complex influence environments.

Our approach integrates:



Strategic advocacy

Positioning institutions to engage effectively across policy ecosystems and regulatory environments.



Institutional outreach

Building trusted relationships across expert communities, think tanks and policy networks.



Information integrity

Monitoring narratives, countering disinformation and defending institutional credibility.

Together these capabilities help institutions shape influence, strengthen credibility and navigate contested narratives.



Strategic Advocacy in 2026

Influence in the modern information environment depends on the ability to align three elements:

Evidence

Credible, research-backed positions that anchor debates before narratives polarize.

Credible networks

Trusted relationships across policy, expert and institutional communities.

Narrative strategy

The capability to monitor, shape and defend narratives across digital and institutional arenas.

Institutions that combine these capabilities will be better positioned to sustain influence and institutional trust in complex policy environments.