



Prominence with Precaution:

# Addressing Leadership and Visibility in Today's Threat Environment

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**Today's CEOs live a paradox: the visibility that fuels trust, credibility and influence also magnifies their exposure to risk. To manage that exposure, executives must align their public presence with a disciplined digital strategy, continuous threat surveillance and a security posture built to deter real-world risks.**

## The Leadership Visibility Equation

As the public faces of their organizations, C-suite executives are in the spotlight across all facets of life: traditional and social media, travel, corporate and industry events and public appearances. Executives are expected to share forward-looking perspectives on platforms like LinkedIn and X, articulating their vision, the corporate mission and strategy, and raising brand awareness. Being visible and available—while crafting an engaging, authentic voice that resonates with investors, customers and employees—demands strategic planning and careful messaging to align with corporate values, reinforce brand identity and spark meaningful conversation, all while avoiding unintended risks.

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**Courtney Adante**  
President, Security Risk Advisory  
courtney.adante@teneo.com

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**Andrew Lee**  
Senior Managing Director and  
Head of Teneo Digital  
andrew.lee@teneo.com

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**Elizabeth Buckley**  
Managing Director, Head of  
Cybersecurity Advisory  
elizabeth.buckley@teneo.com

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**Brian Stephens**  
Head of Resilience &  
Security Solutions  
brian.stephens@teneo.com

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Crafting an executive presence isn't simply about amplifying reach. It requires deliberate choices about where to engage, how to communicate and how frequently to show up. CEOs who adopt a thoughtful, disciplined digital strategy are better positioned to maximize the benefits of influence while reducing the chances of missteps or reputational distractions. This type of alignment creates clarity in a crowded, noisy marketplace and ensures that personal commentary remains connected to business objectives, rather than drifting into sensitive or problematic areas that could trigger stakeholder concern, regulatory scrutiny, public backlash—or worse—physical harm. Visibility must be understood not only as an opportunity but also as an important frontier in the organization's overall risk landscape.

### The Convergence of Digital and Physical Risk

Unfortunately, CEOs and executive teams, by virtue of their leadership and brand association, face a growing list of threat actors and potential attacks. Tactics include high profile account takeovers, ransomware, extortion, deepfakes, disinformation campaigns, doxxing attacks and even physical security threats, which are occurring with increasing and alarming frequency. Cyber posture must balance expectations of influence with these concerns in an increasingly exposed digital world. For example, in May this year, adversaries published personally identifiable information on over 1,000 CEOs in "The CEO Database,"<sup>1</sup> which has since been

taken down. In 2023, the Ponemon Institute and digital executive protection firm BlackCloak reported that, out of more than 550 companies surveyed, 42%<sup>2</sup> had a senior executive or executive's family member digitally compromised. Security specialists note these trends are showing no signs of slowing.

Targeted digital attacks against executives are just one part of a complex problem facing companies today. High-profile companies and leadership face inextricably linked personal and organizational threats: social engineering schemes often exploit personal details shared on platforms like X and LinkedIn, leading to unauthorized access to company systems and executive communications, triggering costly incident responses. Theft of sensitive company data—including financial information, intellectual property, employee records and other proprietary content—can cause reputational damage and reduce shareholder value for months or even years.

Executives also contend with tangible physical threats rooted in online exposure. Since the tragic events surrounding UnitedHealthcare Insurance CEO Brian Thompson in December 2024, over 2,200 direct threats against CEOs were identified<sup>3</sup> in just five weeks following his murder, forcing leaders to alter travel routes, implement residential security upgrades and rely on discrete protective teams during public engagements. Incidents involving protestors and aggressive activists targeting CEOs at high-profile



1 [https://flashpoint.io/blog/ceo-database-exposes-information-on-executives/?CRO3=%233007\\_control](https://flashpoint.io/blog/ceo-database-exposes-information-on-executives/?CRO3=%233007_control)

2 <https://go.blackcloak.io/23-BlackCloak-Ponemon-Market-Survey-Report>

3 <https://www.securityinfowatch.com/security-executives/article/55269956/how-online-threats-and-ai-manipulation-are-endangering-corporate-executives>



conferences—ranging from climate marches to investor summits—have surged, underscoring how reputational narratives can spill into real-world harassment. Reflecting this shift, U.S. companies are now spending record amounts on executive protection. Notably, 2024 saw double-digit increases in security budgets, with median spend per executive rising sharply as firms raced to fortify against both physical and digital threats.<sup>4</sup> Most recently in July, major brands made global headlines under tragic circumstances due to a targeted active shooter event in midtown Manhattan.

### Implications for CEOs and Executive Teams

As noted in our introduction, these developments underscore a simple paradox: visibility, voice and influence as the face of the brand can coexist with the threat that they create. That visibility, if not properly managed, can be weaponized to cause harm to the individual, their family and company. In today's online world, representing leadership, authority and confidence in the strategy and future of the company through corporate channels is expected. But as visibility grows, so does the need for a calibrated plan that spans digital narrative control, targeted threat monitoring and a structured security maturity program.

### Teneo's Executive Risk Management Framework

Against this backdrop, Teneo's CEO & Executive Risk Management Services help leaders "lean in" publicly—shaping narratives, amplifying industry thought leadership and building trust—while implementing discreet and robust digital safeguards, privacy controls and meaningful personal security measures. Whether at an event like Davos, preparing for a virtual town hall or building an active executive social media presence, we enable leaders to proceed with confidence: fully visible and fully protected.

It is important that high-profile, public-facing executives who wish to advance their visibility and digital presence understand the spectrum of security maturity, calibrating the right measures and associated potential risk. We view executive security and risk mitigation strategies along a continuum:

- **High Risk Tolerance / Low-Cost Capabilities**  
These organizations have made minimal investment in security, either across the business or focused on the executive. The program is basic, informal and reactive. The implications include high exposure, poor visibility into the threat landscape and minimal protection of company assets.
- **Moderate Security Investment**  
These organizations have core protections in place for both physical and cybersecurity, including the broader employee base. Some executive protections may be considered (e.g., secure comms, home networks, travel) and are delivered as part of a corporate program.
- **Aggressive Defensive Posture**  
Here, security is treated as a business-critical function. Advanced tools are deployed for cybersecurity and physical security protections. Corporate security includes comprehensive monitoring, crisis planning and enterprise-wide coverage for executives, with faster detection and response.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/us-companies-spending-record-amounts-protect-executives-threats-rise-2025-08-05/>

- **Extreme Privacy**

Organizations and executives at this level build privacy and security into all systems and activities, deploying a zero-trust strategy. This focus is on strategic resilience.

Understanding the current corporate security posture and desired target state based on the executive's perspective and risk tolerance, Teneo aligns **executive digital strategy, communications and physical and cybersecurity services to mitigate risk** and advance both visibility and protection.

- 1. Assessment:** Teneo conducts a rigorous review of the threat landscape facing the sector, the organization and its C-suite executives—combining intelligence, analytics and executive-specific concerns to identify risks and opportunities.
- 2. Strategy & Recommendations:** Based on the assessment, Teneo develops a tailored roadmap aligning communications and strategy with the executive's personal and corporate brand, message and desired visibility.
- 3. Implementation:** Our digital and security experts collaborate on deploying visibility initiatives, communications and protections—ensuring balance between influence and security.
- 4. Response:** In the event of an incident, Teneo rapidly mobilizes to provide coordinated communications and security support for the executive (and family if required).

## Prominence, Protected

In 2025, CEOs and senior executives face a dual mandate: to lead with visible authority and remain resilient to increasingly sophisticated threats. True success lies in progressing along the security maturity continuum—blending digital strategy, targeted threat monitoring and adaptive protections into a unified approach. With Teneo's CEO & Executive Risk Management Services, leaders gain the confidence to project thought leadership boldly and amplify their voices, with the assurance that their safety and reputational integrity are safeguarded by world-class resilience and protection.

For more information, please email

[teneoriskadvisory@teneo.com](mailto:teneoriskadvisory@teneo.com)



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Teneo is the global CEO advisory firm. We partner with our clients globally to do great things for a better future.

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Our full range of advisory services includes strategic communications, investor relations, financial transactions and restructuring, management consulting, physical and cyber risk, organizational design, board and executive search, geopolitics and government affairs, corporate governance and ESG.

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