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W H I T E P A P E R

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Reddit, Substack  
and the new  
dynamics of

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**influence in  
communications**

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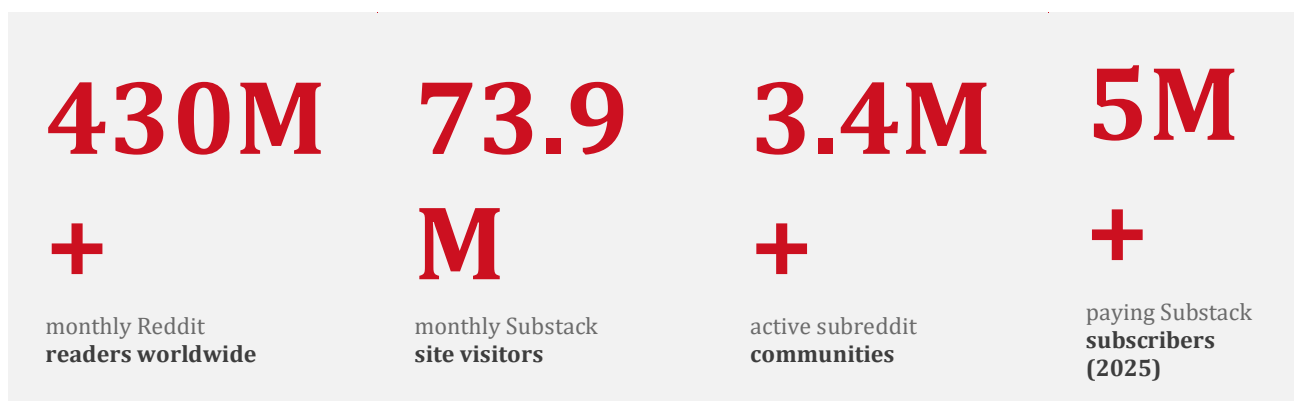
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For decades, communications strategies have revolved around the same proven set of channels: established media outlets, trusted analyst houses and corporate platforms. But in recent years that structure has been gradually becoming more complex and layered, as independent newsletters, creator-driven media and online communities have started to expand.

As such, platforms like Reddit and Substack have started to overshadow Instagram and LinkedIn to sit at the centre of this development. Both environments operate very differently from traditional media — Reddit is built on community discussion and peer credibility, while Substack allows independent writers to publish directly to their audiences.

This paper answers three key questions: how do these platforms affect brand perception? What role should they play in a modern brand's communications strategy? And how should organisations participate without undermining their credibility?

### The Modern Communications Ecosystem



## The expanding media ecosystem

Over the last few years, traditional newsrooms have undergone significant restructuring, with many layoffs and office closures. This has forced many independent journalists and commentators to move towards direct publishing models. At the same time, online communities have grown into influential hubs of conversation and authority.

For communicators, this move has helped expand the definition of "media relations." Today, clients expect their coverage and commentary to appear in newsletters, discussion threads and community forums alongside the more traditional — but still highly relevant — business, trade and consumer publications. Indeed, in a world increasingly dominated by LLMs, it is not only useful, but **critical to ensure your brand is covered across a range of credible, independent third-party backed information sources.**

*In a world increasingly dominated by large language models, ensuring your brand is covered across a range of credible, independent, third-party backed information sources is no longer optional — it is critical.*

## Reddit: a window into real audience conversations



Reddit has long been perceived as difficult terrain for marketers. The platform values authenticity and peer-to-peer discussion, making overt promotion ineffective. Lately, due to its scale and influence, Reddit has become a core part of a broader PR strategy.

As the **5th most visited website in the world** (just above TikTok), Reddit attracts over 430 million monthly readers and hosts more than 3.4 million topic-specific communities known as "subreddits." These communities form around interests, industries and shared experiences. Users exchange advice, analyse products and debate news stories in depth.

# 44%

of Reddit users are aged 18-29

*Making Reddit particularly influential for technology, consumer and developer topics.*

### Why Reddit conversations matter

Reddit conversations tend to feel more trustworthy because they come from real people rather than being driven by corporate messaging. That makes them genuinely useful for comms teams to pay attention to. The threads show how audiences actually react to announcements, company changes and wider industry news. Because users tend to speak candidly, these conversations can provide early insights into emerging concerns or misunderstandings.

In many cases, Reddit discussions surface issues before they appear in mainstream coverage. Monitoring these conversations can help organisations:

- Identify reputational risks at an early stage

- Understand how messaging resonates with technical or enthusiast audiences
- Detect emerging industry narratives
- Track competitor perceptions

*In this sense, Reddit functions less like a broadcast channel and more like a continuous focus group — surfacing audience sentiment, emerging narratives and competitive perceptions in real time, often before they reach mainstream media.*

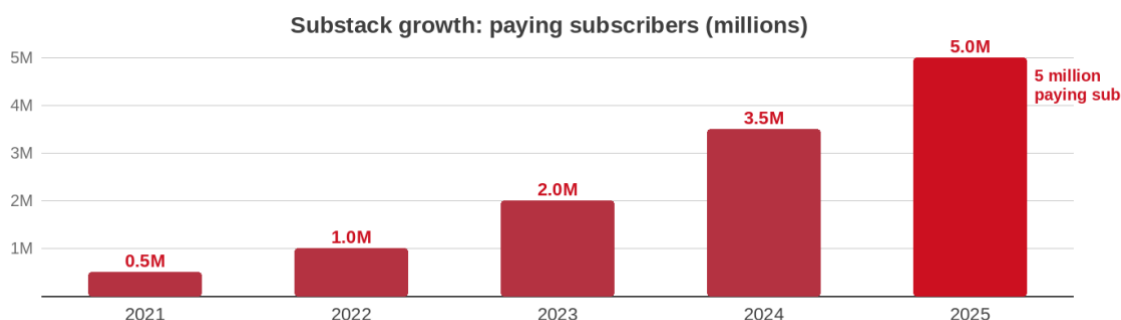
## How to participate on Reddit

Direct participation on Reddit requires careful judgment. The platform has a strong cultural norm against marketing language or self-promotion, so comms teams need to be transparent about who they represent. They need to actively participate in relevant communities and contribute useful information rather than solely push brand messaging. Only then will Reddit communities respond favourably.

# Substack: the rise of creator-led media

While Reddit thrives on crowd-driven debate, Substack takes a completely different approach. Originally a simple tool for newsletters, it has since grown into a full publishing hub where writers share long-form pieces, podcasts and video directly with their subscribers.

Unlike social media platforms that prioritise advertising and algorithmic feeds, Substack centres on the relationship between writer and reader. Content arrives directly in subscribers' inboxes, allowing creators to build audiences independent of traditional media organisations. This model has encouraged a wave of independent journalism and commentary.



By 2025, the platform hosted **5 million paying subscribers** across thousands of newsletters, demonstrating the viability of this direct publishing model. Overall, it has around **73.9 million site visitors** — exceeding the traffic of the Wall Street Journal and CBS.com. This puts Substack increasingly in a new tier of media relations.

## Why Substack matters for thought leadership

Many newsletters operate similarly to specialist publications by breaking stories, analysing industry developments and cultivating loyal readerships within specific sectors. Rather than editorial teams inside large organisations, these outlets often consist of individual journalists, analysts or small editorial groups with direct subscriber relationships — specialists who carry deep credibility in their fields.

Substack has become a valuable channel for thought leadership, interviews and expert commentary. Subscribers follow individuals they trust and often pay to access their insights. Content is typically longer, more reflective and more specialised than the short-form material common on social platforms.

For technology companies in particular, niche newsletters frequently reach exactly the audiences that traditional media struggles to serve — engineers, technical founders, developers and specialised analysts.

## How these platforms complement traditional media

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Despite their growing influence, Reddit and Substack do not replace established communications channels. Traditional journalism and analyst relations will remain central to how corporate organisations share their news and views. However, while major publications and analyst houses still set the agenda for many global conversations, independent newsletters and community forums can help further amplify the messaging.

For example, if news breaks in a major publication, a Substack newsletter may analyse its implications for an industry, while Reddit communities may debate the technical details or the impact on customers. Together, these layers form a broader ecosystem. Influence often happens through the interaction between all these channels, not through any single one.

## Building a successful strategy: four practical steps

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There are several practical steps organisations can take to build authority across these new channels while preserving credibility.



1

### Map the conversation

Identify the communities and newsletters that shape discussions within your industry — specialised subreddits where technical users or developers gather, independent analysts publishing sector commentary, and newsletters written by former journalists covering your market. Understanding these helps prioritise engagement and deliver a more targeted approach.

2

### Prioritise expertise over promotion

Both platforms reward substance and in-depth knowledge. Communities and writers respond more positively to technical insights, industry knowledge and useful data than to product messaging. Organisations that provide meaningful contributions are more likely to earn attention and trust.

3

### Build relationships with independent writers

Authors of independent newsletters increasingly function as media outlets in their own right. Establishing relationships with these writers can broaden the reach of thought leadership and commentary — offering expert interviews, research insights, or background context to support their reporting.

4

### Monitor communities for early signs

Regular monitoring of relevant subreddits can reveal early signs of reputational risk, product feedback or industry rumours. Communications teams can use this intelligence to refine messaging or address issues before they escalate — particularly useful for crisis communications or early-stage product releases.

## Conclusion

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Communications strategies have always evolved alongside the media environments they serve. Today, as the landscape changes, it is shaped by independent creators, specialist newsletters and highly engaged online communities. Platforms such as Reddit and Substack highlight how information now moves through networks of individuals as much as through traditional media institutions.

For organisations, this development expands the places where influence is formed. It requires listening to communities, building relationships with independent voices and contributing expertise to conversations already underway. While this has always been the case with thought leadership, using Reddit and Substack further amplifies the strategy of authenticity and true expertise.

Done right, clients can gain access to audiences that are often highly informed, deeply engaged and eager to discuss the technologies they are interested in. This will help them participate in conversations that will truly shape their industries.

**We'd love to talk more about how we can help you.**

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