



CEO Roundtable: 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Executive Report

February 5, 2025

FEATURED SPEAKER: Richard Edelman, CEO, Edelman

This CEO Roundtable featured Richard Edelman, CEO, Edelman, and focused on the findings of the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer. The Edelman Trust Barometer has been at the forefront of revealing seismic global trends. This year's Trust Barometer, which marks Edelman's 25th anniversary of studying trust, offers a blueprint for societal leaders to build a more trusting future by overcoming polarization, earning legitimacy, and motivating the public to address large-scale challenges to trust.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Grievances must be addressed.** The institutional failures of the last 25 years have produced grievances around the world, stifling growth and innovation. Those with low, moderate, and high levels of grievance feel that business is obligated to **provide good-paying jobs in local communities, train or reskill employees to be competitive, and nurture workplace civility to facilitate discussions about contentious issues.** To lead through this crisis, understand the economic realities of your stakeholders, champion shared interests, and create opportunities for optimism.
- **Business has a license to act.** Those with a higher sense of grievance are more likely to believe that business is not doing enough to address societal issues, such as **affordability, climate change, retraining, misinformation, and discrimination.** Still, business remains the only institution viewed as both competent and ethical, and it has seen a 19pp increase in perceived business ethics since 2020. To navigate public expectations, understand where you have obligations, act on behalf of your stakeholders, and advocate for your organization.
- **Business can't act alone.** 6 in 10 people hold grievances against business, government, and the rich, and 4 in 10 people see hostile activism as a viable means to drive change. Business, government, media, and NGOs must work together to address the root causes of grievance and enable trust, growth, and prosperity. **Invest in local communities, quality information, and job skills. Deliver results that benefit everyone fairly.**
- **With trust, optimism overpowers grievance.** Those in the bottom income quartile are, on average, 13pps less trusting of institutions – including business, NGOs, government, and media – than those in the top income quartile. In most developed economies, less than 1 in 5 people believe the next generation will be better off. When institutions can't be trusted to do what is right, grievances fester and outlooks darken. To dissipate grievance and increase optimism, **prioritize and rebuild trust across your organization and local communities.**

"Times of disruption give us the best opportunities to shape the future. It's now that we, as companies, have the chance to ask, 'What is it that I bring to the table?'"
– **Barbara Humpton, President & CEO, Siemens Corporation**

"Business cannot put its head down and hope the storm will pass. Business needs to be a part of the solution by offering well-paid jobs, reskilling employees, and providing innovative and affordable products."
– **Richard Edelman, CEO, Edelman**

"We used to have one pane of glass to look through to get our information and now it's shattered into hundreds of pieces, creating siloes. How do we find and share truth when it's all so fragmented?"
– **Scott Stanzel, Chief Communications Officer, Truist**

Participating current and former executives from:



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