



SPECIAL REPORT: WEB SUMMIT RIO 2026

JULY 2026

**Key Takeaways from Web Summit
Rio 2026 for Corporate
Communication**

SUMMARY

1. Opening Message	3
2. Food for Thought	5
3. Prompts	6
4. Credits	17

OPENING MESSAGE

Entering its fourth edition, Web Summit Rio is already firmly consolidated as one of Latin America's leading technology and innovation events, serving as a vital platform for observing the economic, cultural, and social transformations reshaping contemporary organizations, markets, and societies.



Artificial intelligence remained an overarching and pervasive theme. However, in a departure from previous iterations, the central question shifted from “What is AI capable of?” to “How do we want to live, work, and create value in a world mediated by AI?”. This shift in perspective permeated discussions spanning communication, journalism, marketing, leadership, creativity, organizational culture, regulation, and economic development.

Over the four-day event, it became clear that many seemingly technological issues are, fundamentally, profoundly human ones.

The adoption of artificial intelligence within organizations proved to rely less on computational power and more on culture, trust, and the willingness to reinvent processes and ways of working.



The discussions surrounding information and the media demonstrated that, in an environment saturated with synthetic content, attributes such as credibility, rigorous fact-checking, and human judgment have become increasingly valuable. Within the realm of brands and communication, there was a noticeable emphasis on authenticity, community building, and the ability to create meaning amid a landscape of growing technological homogenization.

Perhaps the main lesson from Web Summit Rio 2026 is precisely this: as technological tools become more accessible and widespread, the elements they cannot fully replicate (namely context, depth of knowledge, experience, creativity, relationships, and trust) become more critical.

It is based on this premise that Aberje has, for years, actively monitored leading international forums dedicated to technology, innovation, communication, and culture, such as Web Summit in Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon, and SXSW in Austin. Rather than merely tracking trends or anticipating fads, the goal of this continuous engagement is to build bridges between global discussions and the tangible, everyday challenges faced by leaders, managers, and communication professionals.

Our role in observing these environments is to provide critical curation: identifying emerging signals, understanding their implications, and translating them into practical insights for organizations and professionals. In a landscape defined by technological acceleration and the proliferation of information, perhaps one of the most vital functions of communication is precisely to help transform complexity into understanding, novelty into context, and trends into actionable strategies.

This report is the result of that effort.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1.

What makes a professional truly irreplaceable when artificial intelligence becomes abundant?

2.

Why do so many organizations invest in artificial intelligence, yet so few manage to translate it into tangible value?

web summit
RIO

3.

Is artificial intelligence being used to automate outdated processes, or to fundamentally reinvent how organizations operate?



4.

How can we build trust in an environment where producing information is no longer a competitive advantage?

web summit
RIO

5.

Who will be responsible for the truth when anyone, or any machine, can produce content at scale?

6.

If consumers are increasingly turning to language models for answers, do organizations need to start communicating with machines as well?

7.

When everyone has access to the same tools, what keeps a brand relevant?

8.

Does Brazil merely intend to adopt artificial intelligence, or will it actively participate in shaping its future?



ARE WE PREPARED TO WORK ALONGSIDE AGENTS?

At Web Summit Rio 2025, AI agents emerged as one of the key strategic bets for the future of work. In 2026, the discussion took on a new tone: **that future is now materializing.**

Throughout the event, technology companies, consulting firms, and organizations showcased concrete examples of agents handling functions previously considered exclusively human, such as software development, data analysis, information monitoring, and decision-making support.

Moving beyond mere productivity tools, **these agents are beginning to assume the role of digital collaborators**, capable of executing entire stages of a process under human supervision.

In this context, a central question emerged: as AI agents become integrated into daily workflows, **which human capabilities become most valuable?**

This was the core insight of the presentation by **Howard Pyle**, founder of Experience Futures (XF).

According to him, **organizations are beginning to observe the emergence of two distinct groups of professionals:**

- Those who significantly augment their capabilities using artificial intelligence;
- And those who remain on the sidelines of this transformation, despite having access to the same tools and training.

The distinction, Pyle argues, lies not necessarily in technical proficiency, but rather in skills such as the ability to identify patterns within complex contexts, translate tacit knowledge accumulated through professional experience, and exercise critical judgment over machine-generated outputs.

However, this assertion should not be viewed solely as an individual challenge. It also serves as a critical alert for organizations.

If the adoption of AI is creating new performance and learning asymmetries, organizations and leadership must take an active role in developing these capabilities, fostering environments of experimentation, learning, and continuous adaptation.

While last year's discussion focused on the arrival of AI agents, in 2026 the core question has shifted: how do we prepare people and organizations to work alongside them?

[HIGHLIGHT]



“You can't protect what you can't name”.

The primary competitive advantage for professionals in the AI era may lie precisely in what they find hardest to articulate: their accumulated experience, depth of knowledge, and critical judgment.

— Howard Pyle, Founder of Experience Futures (XF).

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TRUTH?

AI has dramatically expanded content production capabilities. However, contrary to dire predictions regarding the displacement of professionals by technology, the role of human judgment is emerging as increasingly vital.

Representatives from organizations such as the **Associated Press (AP)** and **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** presented a pragmatic perspective on the use of artificial intelligence in journalism.

Rather than utilizing technology to replace editorial production, these organizations have deployed AI systems to automate operational tasks, including social media monitoring, transcription, large-scale data analysis, and information structuring.

The objective is to free up professionals' time so they can focus on what remains fundamentally human.

As AFP's **Laura Bonilla** highlighted, AI should help get journalists out from behind their screens, reconnecting them with sources, investigative work, and context.

In the words of AP's **Paul Byrne**, it is about bringing professionals as close as possible to the story's "ground zero"; the precise point where the news originates.

The discussions also underscored the need for new governance models. In environments where synthetic content can be generated at scale, media organizations emphasize that the responsibility for fact-checking, validation, and information quality ultimately rests with individuals and institutions.

At the same time, the industry is beginning to address more profound transformations. With the shrinking of local newsrooms and the fragmentation of audiences, organizations like the AP already envision a future where information is distributed in an increasingly modular and personalized manner.

As noted during the panel, the challenge for AP may no longer be merely producing news but rather evolving into a trusted information platform capable of being seamlessly integrated and adapted to diverse contexts and needs.

Laura Bonilla pointed out that, regardless of the technology, the essence of the work remains unchanged. “The fundamentals of journalism remain the same. It is about talking to people: it is accuracy, accuracy, accuracy,” she emphasized.

In the corporate environment, reclaiming this essence is vital. By delegating routine operational tasks to AI, communication teams can focus on what no technology can replicate: the depth of stakeholder relationships, active listening, and the development of cohesive institutional narratives.

As information production becomes increasingly accessible, abundant, and inexpensive, an organization’s primary competitive advantage shifts to its ability to cultivate trust, provide context, and generate meaning.

The question that emerges for companies, media organizations, and leadership is as simple as it is complex: **who will be responsible for the truth?**

[HIGHLIGHT]

“We need to get journalists out from behind their screens and back to their sources”.

The true potential of AI in journalism may not lie in content generation, but rather in freeing up time for activities that demand investigative work, context, and human connection.

— Laura Bonilla, Agence France-Presse (AFP).



IN THE ERA OF CONTENT HYPER-PRODUCTION, WHAT MAKES A BRAND RELEVANT?

The barriers of content production has been drastically lowered by AI. **Text, images, videos, and campaigns can now be generated at scale**, with ever-increasing speed and quality.

However, one of the most compelling discussions centered precisely on what technology alone cannot yet produce: cultural relevance.

Executives from companies such as **Nubank, Globo, and Winnin Intelligence** highlighted that as tools and data become widely accessible, differentiation no longer stems solely from the capacity to produce content; rather, it depends on the ability to create meaning.

For brands, this means understanding that audience attention is not captured solely through algorithmic efficiency or the volume of media investment. It is built through participation in conversations,

communities, and cultural ecosystems that already resonate with audiences. The data presented by Winnin underscore this insight: **over 70% of brand-related engagement takes place outside official channels**, driven by content that is spontaneously created and shared by users.

Beyond traditional methods, data-driven behavioral research is uncovering new opportunities that were previously hard to spot. Another key takeaway from the event is the fundamental shift currently redefining communication.

As noted by **Tiago Lara of Nubank**, organizations no longer communicate exclusively with consumers, but also with language models, which now serve as intermediaries in the discovery and recommendation of products, services, and brands.

In this landscape, the concept of “lore”, defined as the symbolic, cultural, and narrative universe built around brands, gains prominence.

When everyone has access to the same tools and information, what sets an organization apart is its ability to cultivate identity, a sense of belonging, and meaning.

The insights shared at Web Summit Rio 2026 suggest that the next battle for attention may not be won by those who produce the highest volume of content, but by those who can forge the most meaningful connections.

[HIGHLIGHT]

“I no longer communicate exclusively with people. I also have a commitment to communicate with LLMs”.

As language models begin to mediate the discovery and recommendation of products, brands, and services, corporate communication must also account for these new stakeholders.

— Tiago Lara, Marketing Director at Nubank.



HOW TO GENERATE EMOTION IN TIMES OF AI MEDIATION?

An apparent paradox characterizes the current technological landscape.

As AI tools advance rapidly, there is a growing recognition that certain human capabilities are becoming more vital, not less.

This concept manifested in various forms throughout the event. It permeated discussions spanning work, leadership, communication, culture, and entertainment.

Across these distinct contexts, a similar consensus emerged: **while technology augments capabilities, it does not eliminate the need for depth of knowledge, critical judgment, creativity, experience, and human connection.**

This theme featured prominently in discussions regarding the adoption of artificial intelligence within organizations.

Industry experts, such as Leandro Angelo from CI&T, have emphasized that the most effective tools are those designed to augment human capabilities rather than merely automate tasks. According to Angelo, the transformation driven by AI is not strictly technological; it is fundamentally human and organizational, requiring new approaches to learning, collaboration, and adaptability.

This perspective resonated strongly throughout discussions on entertainment, the creator economy, and experiential engagement. Executives from Rock in Rio noted that, in an era of hyper-connectivity and content saturation, there is an increasing premium on experiences that generate genuine emotion, lasting impressions, and social connection. Similarly, dialogues regarding community building and the creative economy underscored the importance of identity, belonging, and the ability to cultivate meaningful relationships with diverse audiences.

The same logic applies to leadership and organizational dynamics. While technology has been primarily associated with operational efficiency for decades, the current transformation brings core human capabilities back to the forefront: interpreting complex contexts, building trust, fostering experimentation, and cultivating environments that promote collaboration and continuous learning.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence appears to create a paradoxical effect.

By making certain capabilities more accessible, it significantly increases the value of those that remain rooted in human experience, context, emotion, and empathy.

[HIGHLIGHT]

“While the disruption is technological, the transformation is human. The greatest risk is not technology failing, but rather our inability to match the pace of learning it demands”.

The gap between hyper-efficiency and genuine business reinvention lies in our ability to redesign processes that, in the pre-AI era, have simply ceased to be relevant.

— Leandro Angelo,artner and Executive Vice President, CI&T Latin America.



IS BRAZIL BUILDING AI OR JUST ADOPTING IT?

Discussions surrounding regulation, technological development, and competitiveness have made it clear that the topic has transcended corporate innovation to become a matter of national strategy. The debate now encompasses not only how to deploy these technologies but also how to build the infrastructure, expertise, and production capacity required to sustain a more active role in this process.

Ronaldo Lemos, a member of the META Oversight Board and The Institute for Technology and Society (ITS Rio), highlighted the need for AI legislation to account for Brazil's specific context, emphasizing the importance of training, protection, and literacy to prevent widening inequalities – a dialogue he views as still largely superficial. Meanwhile, the issue is advancing in the Federal Senate, where a draft text is currently under consideration.

For Lemos, the primary risk lies in total dependence on foreign AI, whether American or Chinese. The solution, he argues, is a “tropicalized” AI: systems, applications, and models capable of addressing the specific economic, social, cultural, and linguistic realities of countries like Brazil.

Considering recent news regarding OpenAI's potential IPO, **Bruno Lewicki, Head of Public Policy for OpenAI Latam**, noted that Brazil currently ranks as the company's third-largest market by user base and second-largest by number of developers.

In a year marked by national elections, the company has adopted the C2PA/SynthID protocol, a form of invisible watermarking that enables the identification of the provenance of images generated by OpenAI tools.

The issue raised at Web Summit Rio 2026 goes beyond the debate on technology or regulation. It concerns the position that countries, companies, and institutions intend to occupy in an economy increasingly driven by artificial intelligence.

The core question remains simple: **will Brazil be content with just adopting artificial intelligence, or will it actively participate in defining the future of the technology?**

[HIGHLIGHT]

“Brazil's most significant risk is not developing the capacity to produce artificial intelligence domestically, resulting in complete reliance on foreign AI”.



The issue transcends simple regulation; it requires the development of national sovereignty in this field. Brazil is currently limited to a reactive debate centered on risks, while overlooking the industrial policy necessary to stimulate local innovation and equip its market and society to embrace this technology.

— Ronaldo Lemos, META/ITS.

CREDITS



PRODUCED BY:

Institutional and International Relations

Victor Pereira

Master's degree in Communication Sciences from ECA-USP;
Institutional and International Relations Manager at Aberje.

Luís Eduardo Figueredo

Public Relations; Institutional and International Relations at
Aberje.

Aberje – Brazilian Association for Business Communication

BOARD:

Paulo Nassar, Full Professor at ECA-USP and President of Aberje.
Hamilton dos Santos, CEO of Aberje.

Copyright © 2026 by ABERJE. All rights to this publication are reserved by ABERJE. No part of this publication may be duplicated or reproduced, in whole or in part, by any means, without prior express authorization.

Disclosure on the Use of Artificial Intelligence. The preparation of this report was supported by ChatGPT 5 and ChatGPT 5.5 during June and July 2026.

