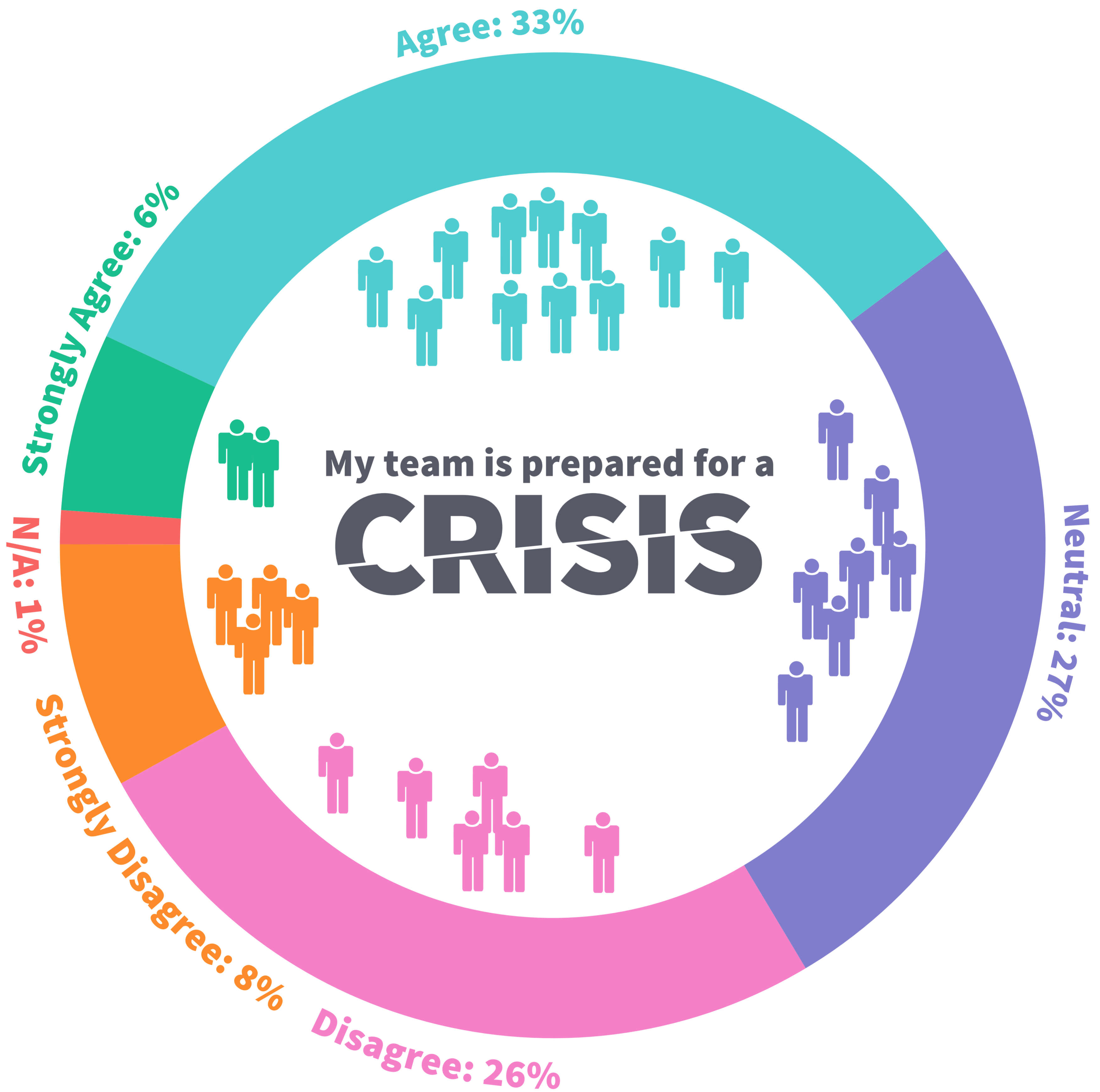




# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS IN A DIGITAL AGE

A  TRENDKITE PR Playbook



## Intro

In the digital age, the internet brings a lot of fantastic things to the PR profession, opening new mediums, offering data-driven insights, and allowing new opportunities. But on the other side, it also brings challenges in the overwhelming speed at which news spreads. With endless examples of poorly handled situations, PR knows in this digital age, there is no hiding a burgeoning crisis. So when discussing PR crises and preparedness, make sure to reframe your thinking for today's world: are you prepared for a digital crisis in a digital age?

# Preparation

## **Today's Stakeholders** A Direct Line to the CEO

Reputation is more important than ever, all the way up to the highest person in the company. Today's CEOs are being compensated, judged, and even fired, based on company and brand reputation. This bodes well for PR, but also puts a lot of pressure on crisis management.

**“One major misstep I’m seeing in crisis comms, particularly on the PR side, is the practice of having account coordinators or interns pull data...the data compiled to equip the CEO, so he/she can make decisions for the company, for brand reputation. That is NOT going to work. The communications team structure must connect a straight line from data to discussions with the CEO.”**



**Brent Diggins**

Senior Vice President  
at Allison+Partners

Running communications through any internal bottleneck that will impede the flow of communication is detrimental, especially during a crisis.

## **Data Collection** Set a Cadence; Collect Data

Based on what works best for your team and your needs, look at what's happening daily/weekly/monthly within the industry, the market, and within competitors' news. A spike or blip in conversation could be a clue to an upcoming issue. Noticing an anomaly early allows quick strategy kick off and the fast evaluation of whether there is an actual crisis or, if not, what is driving the anomaly.

Common missteps include the lack of data collection and the lack of benchmarking. To see where the conversation is going, you have to know where it's been. And to truly be prepared in a crisis, the team has to have access to data so they can craft and target messages based on tangible information.

## Influencer Marketing ‘The Crisis Bucket’

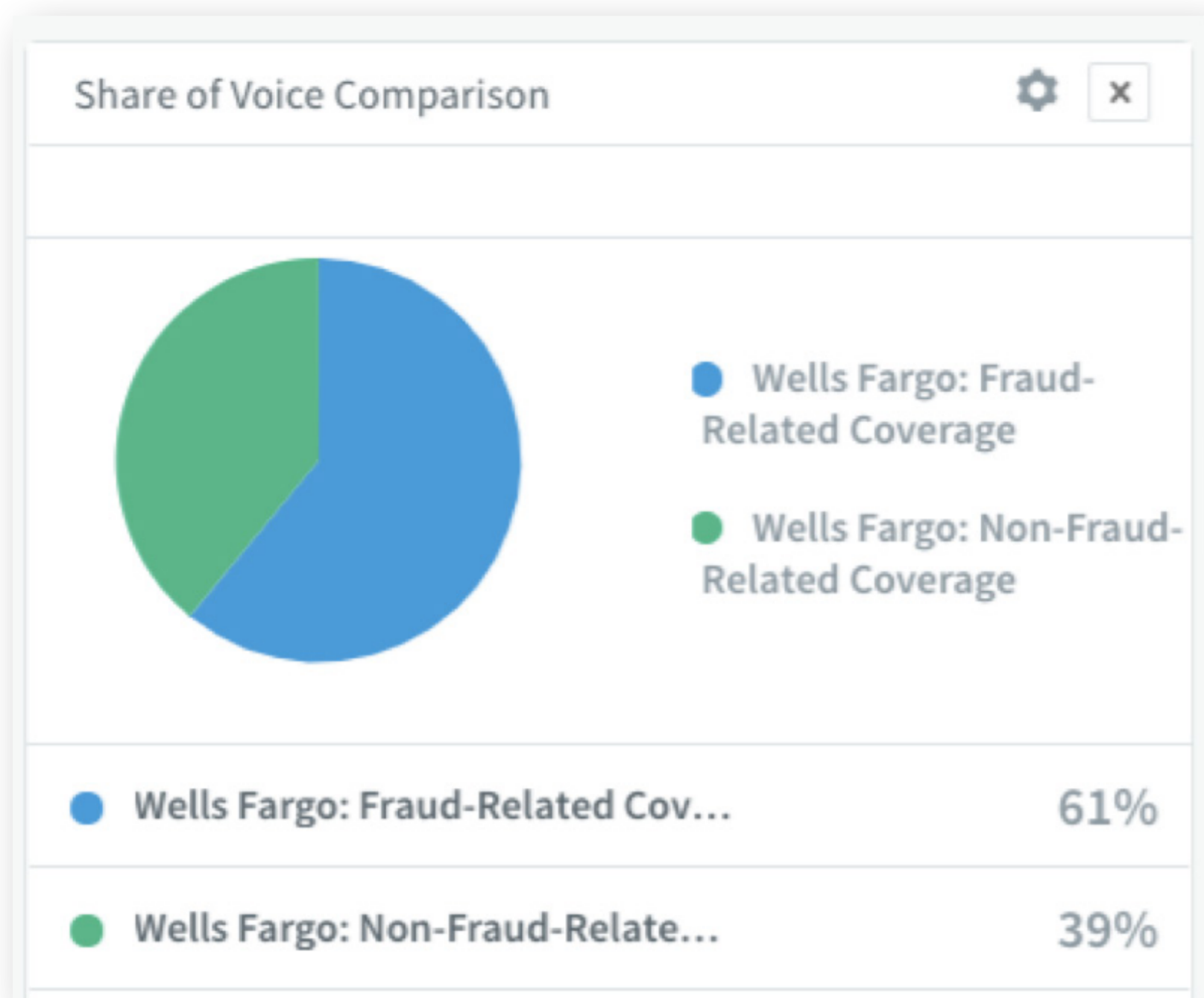
In a crisis, you’re only as strong as your network (or your agency’s network). So, as part of your preparation, identify the people, influencers, and journalists within your realm of operation. They may be friends of your brand, they may be foes of your brand, but they are familiar enough to have had a conversation, written an article, or be quoted in regard to your brand. Once you have 25 to 50 people identified, build your “crisis bucket”. Then, when a crisis starts to gain traction, these are the first people you go to. How are they reacting to the crisis? Positively or negatively? Are they echoing your narrative or latching on to this new one? It’s important to see how they are reacting because they are the ones who have historical context. They can help guide your next steps.



How do I collect data and push it out to the right people in a crisis? It’s a process. Most people are pretty good about running through their traditional crisis scenarios, but they’re not doing well on the data collection part. And data collection isn’t a new thing. Look around your organization, take note to how other teams are harnessing data. What platforms are they using? How are they leveraging the information to inform strategy and decision making? And what are they spending? You can bet there’s budget!

# Crisis in flight

**Play Offense** Don't Allow the Crisis to Dominate

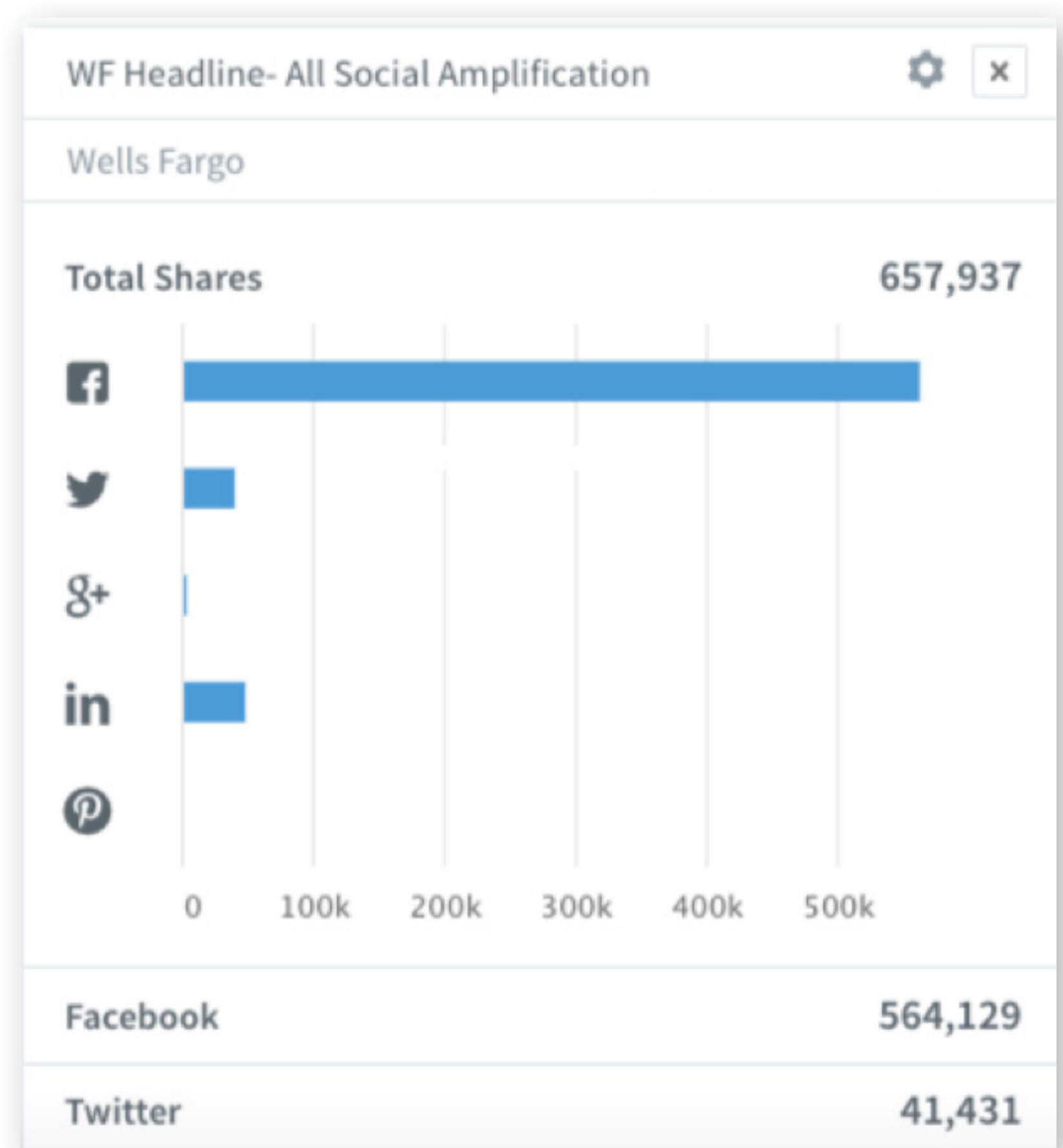


As a crisis begins picking up steam, don't forget the rest of the world. It's imperative to track the things in flight and make sure the crisis isn't owning all of your coverage. Compare your crisis coverage versus non-crisis coverage. You'll be surprised to see, sometimes what you thought was a building crisis actually isn't.

**Real life: An ad agency's recent campaign for an international organization was getting some bad publicity, stemming from their spokesperson's behavior. They were ready to trash the entire campaign (creative be damned!), but, when they ran the analysis, the truth was, the bad publicity wasn't moving the needle at all.**

There were a few negative articles but none impactful enough to create any real traction. The thoughtful analysis saved the campaign, several months of works, and a few people's jobs!

## Tracking the Conversation Leverage Social



This is the epitome of the 'tree falling in the woods metaphor'...If your crisis gets a quick mention in a Wall Street Journal article but no one is sharing it, then is it really worth your first response? When in a crisis, social amplification allows us to look at how a particular article is performing across channels. And helps inform next steps. You may assume that a mention in a major pub is getting the most traction, but the data may show that the story is actually gaining the strongest momentum from trade publications or industry insiders. This will focus your attention and immediacy.

# Consultive Insights

## Information and Insight

### Define Your Seat at the Table

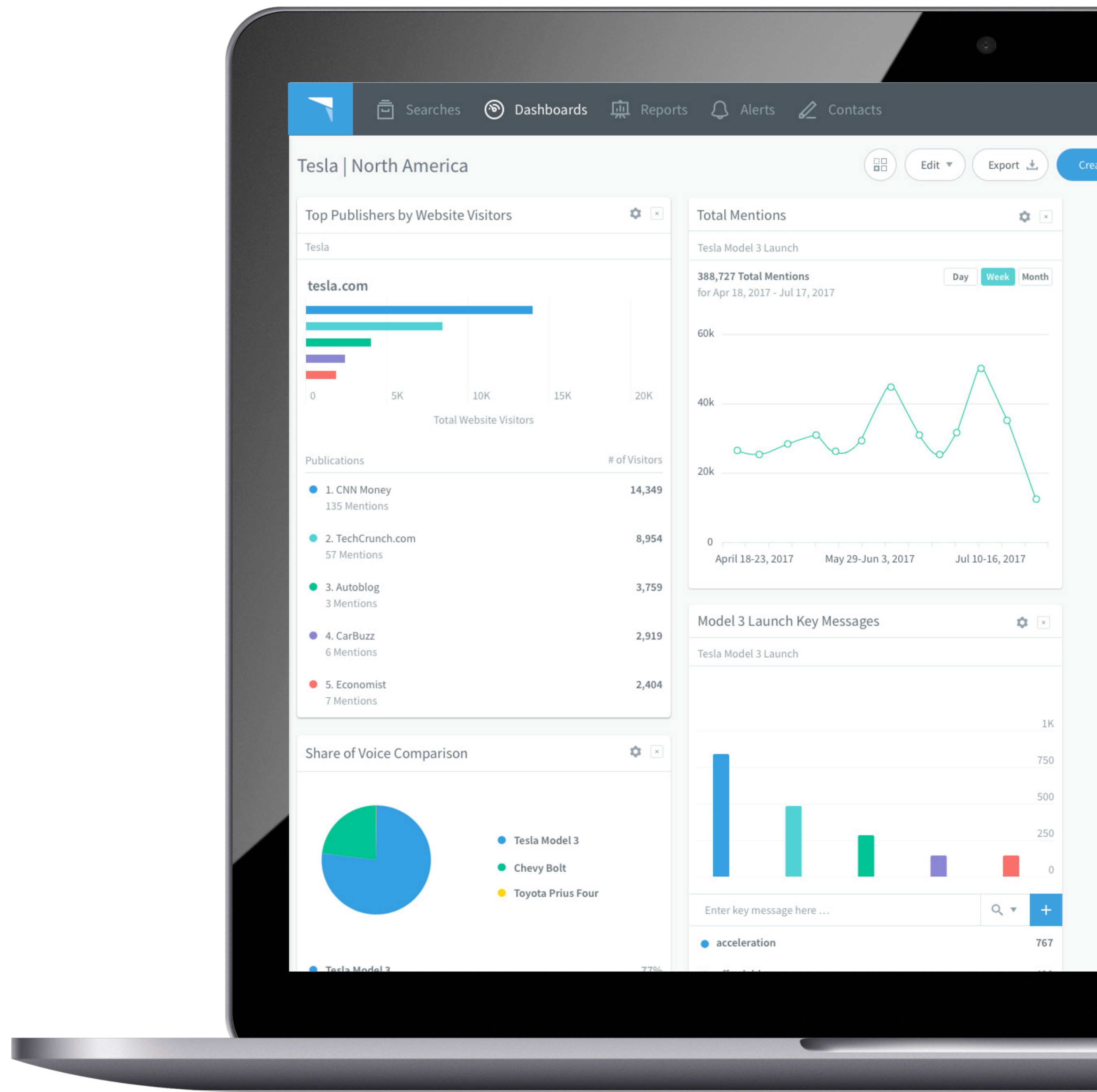
When you have that seat at the table with the CEO, the CMO, whoever it is, you must be the one that is providing the data and insights that the digital economy allows public relations. In building your data arsenal, you become the consultant, leveraging information so you can walk in and definitively say what is happening by providing the clearest picture of the situation. You become an asset that can shape the outcome of a crisis.

**“I always tell the team...we have to be the smartest people in the room.”**



**Brent Diggins**

Senior Vice President  
at Allison+Partners



# Learn More About **TRENDKITE**

See how TrendKite can help you strategize and analyze your digital crisis communications strategy

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