AVION CONSULTING

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Trust Has Gone Local, and the CEO Is Being Asked to Bridge It

Employees trust their own employer far more than they trust business, government, or media generally. That gap has quietly become the CEO's job to close.

78%

Trust in "my employer" globally, 14 points ahead of business overall and 25 points ahead of government

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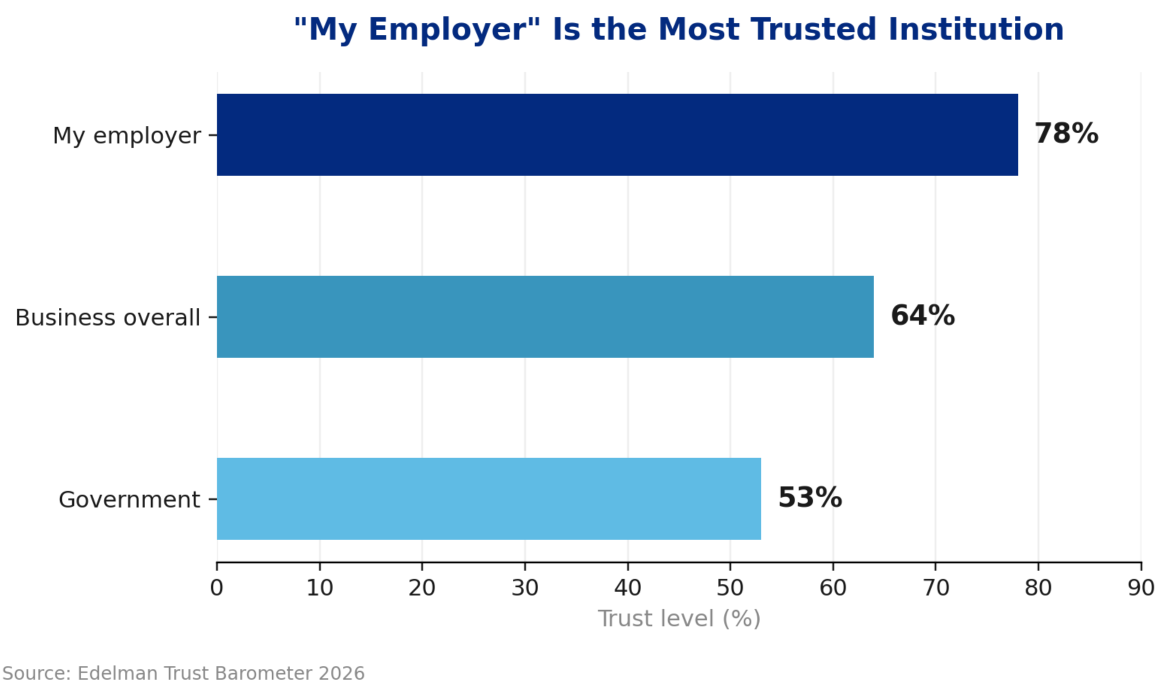
The Institution People Still Trust Is the One They Work For

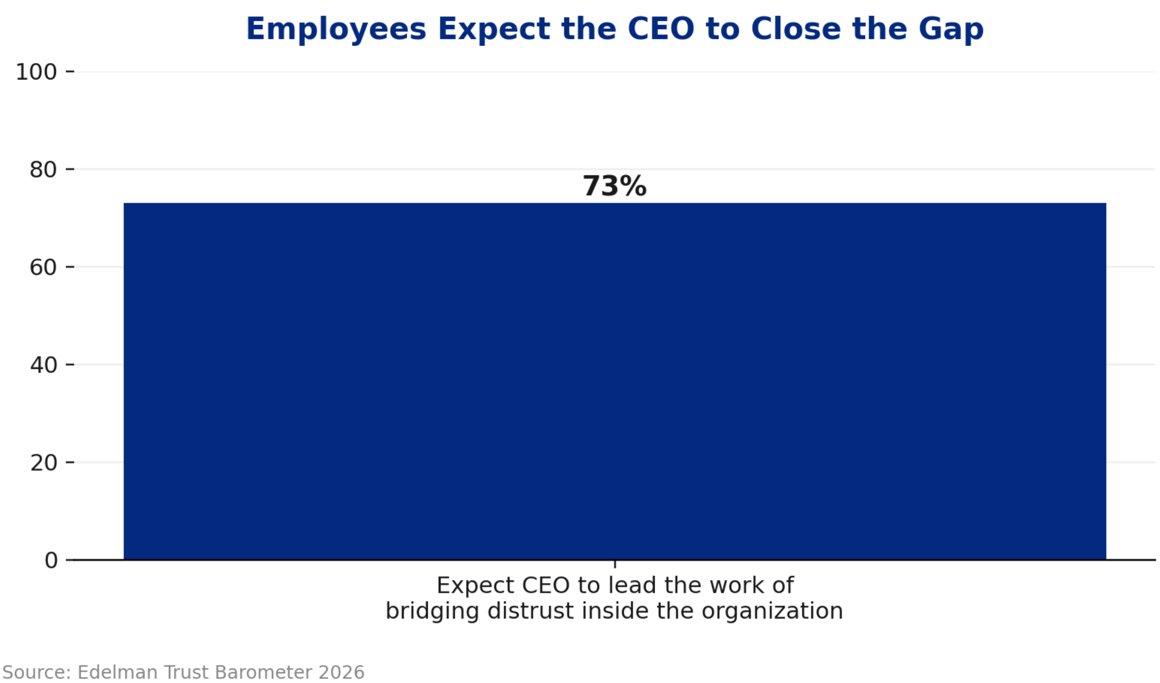
Trust in institutions broadly has been eroding for years, and the 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer confirms the pattern continues at the level of government, media, and business as abstract categories. But there is a sharp exception inside that data. My employer is now the most trusted institution measured globally, at 78 percent, 14 points ahead of business overall and 25 points ahead of government.



Employer trust significantly outpaces trust in business overall and government.

Why That Gap Has Become a Leadership Job

That gap between institutional distrust and employer trust does not close itself, and employees are explicit about who they expect to manage it. Seventy three percent of people expect the CEO to lead the work of bridging distrust inside the organization. That expectation extends beyond the traditional scope of strategy, financial performance, and operational execution into something closer to a civic role, restoring a sense of shared reality for people who trust little else.



A strong majority expect the CEO personally to lead the internal trust-building work.

The Numbers at a Glance

Metric	Figure	Source
Trust in "my employer," global	78%	Edelman Trust Barometer 2026
Trust in business overall, global	64%	Edelman Trust Barometer 2026
Trust in government, global	53%	Edelman Trust Barometer 2026
Expect CEO to lead bridging internal distrust	73%	Edelman Trust Barometer 2026

The Risk of Treating This as Someone Else's Job

It is tempting to route this expectation to internal communications or to the CHRO's engagement survey action plan. The data suggests employees are not looking for a communications campaign. They are looking for the person at the top of the organization to be a visible, credible source of stability in a landscape where most other institutions have lost that role. Delegating that expectation entirely does not meet it.

What This Looks Like When It's Done Well

The organizations protecting this trust advantage are not the ones issuing the most frequent statements. They are the ones where the CEO is a consistent, recognizable presence in moments that matter, unscripted enough that employees experience it as genuine rather than produced by the communications team, and honest enough to acknowledge uncertainty rather than only projecting confidence.

Two Different Jobs to Do

For the CEO

The trust your organization has built is an asset that other institutions have largely lost. Protecting it requires visible, direct, and consistent presence, not just accurate quarterly town halls. This is now a core part of the role, not an adjacent responsibility.

For the CHRO

Give the CEO the information and the venues to do this well: honest read outs of where trust is thin, not just where it is strong, and structured opportunities for direct contact with the workforce that go beyond scripted all hands meetings.

The Opportunity Hiding in This Data

Most institutions would treat a 78 percent trust score as a ceiling to protect defensively. It is better understood as a rare asset that few other institutions still have, one that makes the organization more resilient during periods of external uncertainty than its competitors who have let that trust erode.

References

1. Edelman, "2026 Edelman Trust Barometer."