

KEKST  
CNC

# Strategic Communications Opportunities for Western Companies with Operations in China





# Challenges for Western companies in China

While China and Europe have long been closely linked as major trading and business partners, in recent months there have been growing concerns over the state of the Chinese economy and its governance. After years of extraordinary economic growth, the Chinese Government is pursuing unprecedented structural change, and is deliberately choosing a developmental path that focuses on stability. So while the Chinese market will remain vast and lucrative for Western companies, it is becoming an increasingly complex proposition. And as China is increasingly perceived as a strategic competitor and 'systemic rival', Western companies need to position their China engagement in a strategic and careful way.

In our work with Western businesses, we notice several key positioning challenges:



## **Political complexity at local, national and global levels**

As international relations have become more complex, Western companies have found themselves caught in an intricate web of local, national, and global political systems. There is also an increasing divide between the opinions of stakeholders in home and China markets.



## **Difficulties in managing sensitive topics**

The complex socio-political and economic environment and the vastly differing world views across China and the West have led to growing scrutiny. This has spilled over to Western companies operating in China, with critical public and media reactions in both China and Europe over a range of issues, such as Taiwan and human rights.



## **Opportunistic approach to in-market communications**

Western companies tend to see communications in the China market as good-to-have rather than as essential. Often this means a top-down approach, with global communications activities and messaging being localized without fully understanding local market specifics or strong local teams.

# How Kekst CNC can support

Kekst CNC is uniquely positioned to help companies understand the societal, regulatory and media environment in both Europe and China, given our understanding of local culture, the decision-making process, and our close connections with key influencers.

We have a strong team of senior advisors who are well-versed in working on cross-cultural mandates with both Western and Chinese companies, which includes mandarin speakers.

Our key areas of expertise for supporting Western companies' China-based communications teams include:

## › **Public Affairs**

Produce market sentiment analyses and regulatory briefings. By staying abreast of the topical issues in China, we can anticipate and flag political and public debates to make sure clients' China strategy matches the priorities set by the Chinese Government. We identify the right platforms and opportunities to facilitate conversations with key political stakeholders.

## › **Corporate Reputation and Positioning**

Create an emphasis on business and technology storytelling, to move away from political discussions that are beyond their control. Through an all-round strategy and approach, we aim to help clients understand their perception among key Chinese stakeholders and keep them up to date with peer communications.

## › **Crisis and Issues Management**

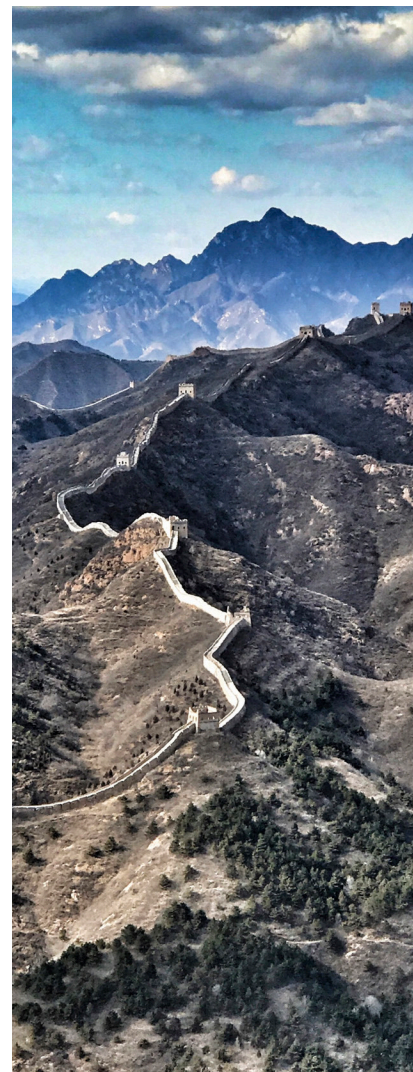
Help clients stay on top of sensitive issues to avoid reputation pitfalls and consumer boycotts, write crisis preparedness plans, and establish contacts with influencers who can be partners in times of crisis.

## › **Media Relations**

Support in building understanding among not only global but also national and local media to help achieve balanced reporting.

## › **Cultural Workshops**

Help clients' headquarters and local teams to build mutual cultural understanding internally and externally in China and to align the business goals through offering cultural audits and training.



To create synergy with in-China communications, beyond and not limited to the above, our key areas of expertise for supporting **Western companies' global communications teams** include:

› **Public Affairs**

Keep clients informed of how government policies will shape the industry and competition, and more broadly design and deliver effective public affairs strategies.

› **Corporate Reputation and Positioning**

Conduct audits of the existing group level communications narratives and develop a China-specific narrative and storyline.

› **Media Relations**

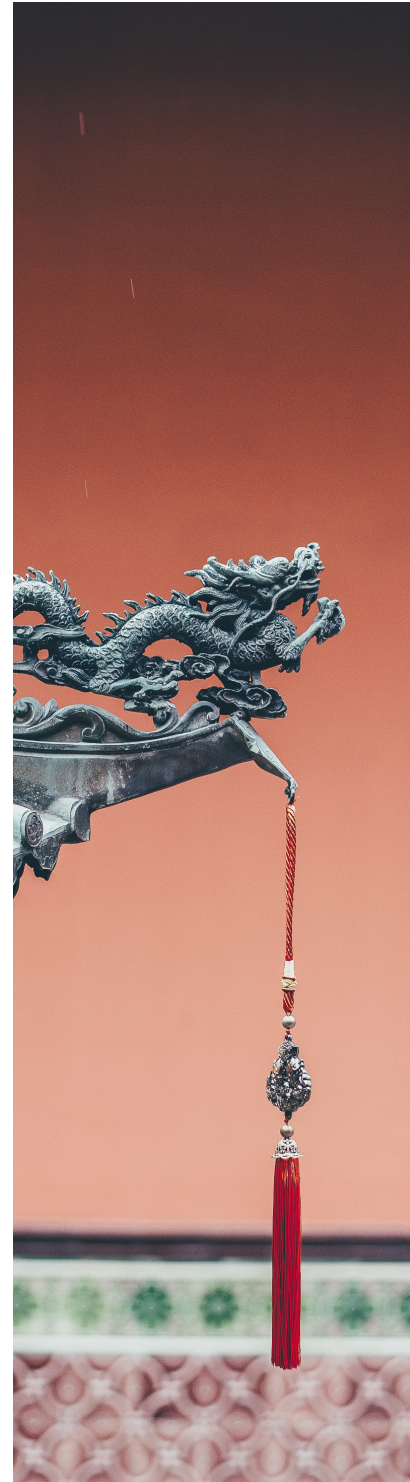
Build relationships with key Europe-based China correspondents and key influencers inside and outside China. Devise and deliver engagement plans that take into account language barriers and travel restrictions.

› **Crisis Communications**

Map out the potential risks through surveys with senior executives, business line managers and public affairs and communication teams. Develop a crisis handbook and crisis preparedness. Host crisis workshops with scenario simulations to explain how a crisis typically unfolds in China and how to successfully handle and manage crisis media relations, etc.

In summary, delivering the right narrative about the China market fuels business growth. This does not necessarily have to mean broad media coverage – it is about having the right strategy and precise implementation. This requires a coordinated approach from both the headquarters and China businesses and a clear focus on the information needs of the Chinese audiences, to ensure effective positioning in and outside of China.

This is where Kekst CNC can add value. We aim to help clients strike the right balance between showing commitment to the China market and maintaining a credible reputation at home.



# About Kekst CNC

Kekst CNC is a global strategic communications firm that specializes in protecting and enhancing reputations. From 14 locations around the globe, our team of more than 300 professionals provides expert communications counsel informed by judgment, insights, and data-led analysis. We apply our communications expertise across high-stakes corporate, financial, and political matters, helping businesses communicate effectively through periods of disruption, transformation and growth. Kekst CNC is part of the Publicis Groupe.



## Global and Local

We are a global firm with deep local roots in the world's key corporate and financial centres, drawing on ideas from some of our industry's most creative and experienced professionals to provide a global perspective for today's interconnected world.



## Exceptional Teams

Kekst CNC's integrated teams of experts support our clients with innovative solutions to complex problems. We combine an unparalleled breadth of experience with informed judgment and a commitment to exceptional execution.



## Enduring Partnerships

We succeed when our clients succeed. We are proud to become a seamless part of our clients' teams, supporting them through critical periods of disruption, transformation and growth.



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