



Making Sense of Disruption:

A Conversation with Wendy's



Bob Bowman

Chief Risk Officer, Chief Ethics
and Compliance Officer



We sat down with Bob Bowman to discuss why he partnered with Polecat immediately after the COVID-19 shock, how the relationship has broadened from brand protection to enterprise-wide foresight, and what he sees on the horizon for intangible risk.

Polecat: Let's start with a bit of reflection—what first prompted you to engage with Polecat?

Bob: Coming out of COVID, everything felt unsettled. Issues would spike, dominate headlines for 24 hours, then disappear. Before Polecat we relied on traditional media-monitoring dashboards—great for a temperature check on what was hot that hour, but not great for understanding which conversations sustain or accumulate risk. We needed to move away from what I called situational intelligence—not just what was happening right now, but a forward-looking tool that shows which topics actually stick, grow, shrink, and resurface over time, ultimately weighing on the brand. Polecat gave us that long-lens perspective.

Polecat: What's been the most valuable part of the experience so far?

Bob: We began with brand and reputational risk, but together we realised the platform could map all our enterprise-risk taxonomy. We're now scenario-planning specific ERM risks through a Polecat lens, tuned precisely to quick-service restaurants. It's more than a product; it's a partnership. Give most teams a mountain of data and they'll struggle to weight or compartmentalise it. Polecat pairs the tooling with the human service layer we need to drive value.

Polecat: How are you using Polecat inside Wendy's today?

Bob: The insights feed directly into our Enterprise Risk Management programme. We track which macro trends are merely headline noise and which we think will persist and materially impact restaurant operations, supply chains, or consumer trust. Because Polecat benchmarks us against sector peers and broader food-service narratives, the data translates cleanly into executive dashboards and board-level discussion.



Polecat: If you had to give your headline ROI statement, what would it be?

Bob: In the most disrupted business climate any of us have seen, Polecat helps us decide which slice of chaos actually matters. It keeps the ERM programme topical—so when the Wall Street Journal or a McKinsey report flags a new threat, we already know whether that issue is building real momentum or fading out.

Polecat: Looking ahead, where do you see the biggest opportunity for support?

Bob: Tangible risks are becoming commodities; the future is in the intangible—data, privacy, cloud resilience. My job is to turn vast information into trainable insight our teams can act on. Polecat's mastery of fluid, fast-moving data sets gets me further along that continuum than anything else I've tried.

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Bob Bowman, CRO, CE&EO Wendy's

Polecat: Finally, what advice would you give to organisations that feel overwhelmed by “everything, everywhere, all at once”?

Bob: The real headache today isn't a lack of intelligence; it's the avalanche of it—especially around intangible risks like digital trust, algorithmic bias, and values-driven activism. We know these factors decide brand fate, yet most executives I talk to (myself included) don't have the hours in the day to keep up. Here's how we tackle it:

- **Capture everything, then curate.** We Hoover up every signal—social chatter, regulator memos, think-tank white-papers—because you can't model what you can't see. Polecat handles the volume so my analysts aren't trapped in spreadsheets.
- **Turn data into trainable insight.** Raw numbers are noise until they teach you something repeatable. I know for example which themes are intensifying versus fading, letting the ERM team build actionable scenarios
- **Serve the C-suite a decision, not a dissertation.** I read 10× more each day than I did at 35, but the board still wants a two-line takeaway. Polecat distils millions of data points into a one-pager my CFO can skim and hand straight to the owner of the risk: “Privacy backlash +18% QoQ—review data retention by Q3.”

Do those three things and you move from “There's too much out there” to “Here's exactly what matters and here's the plan.” Detail is great, but direction wins board meetings.