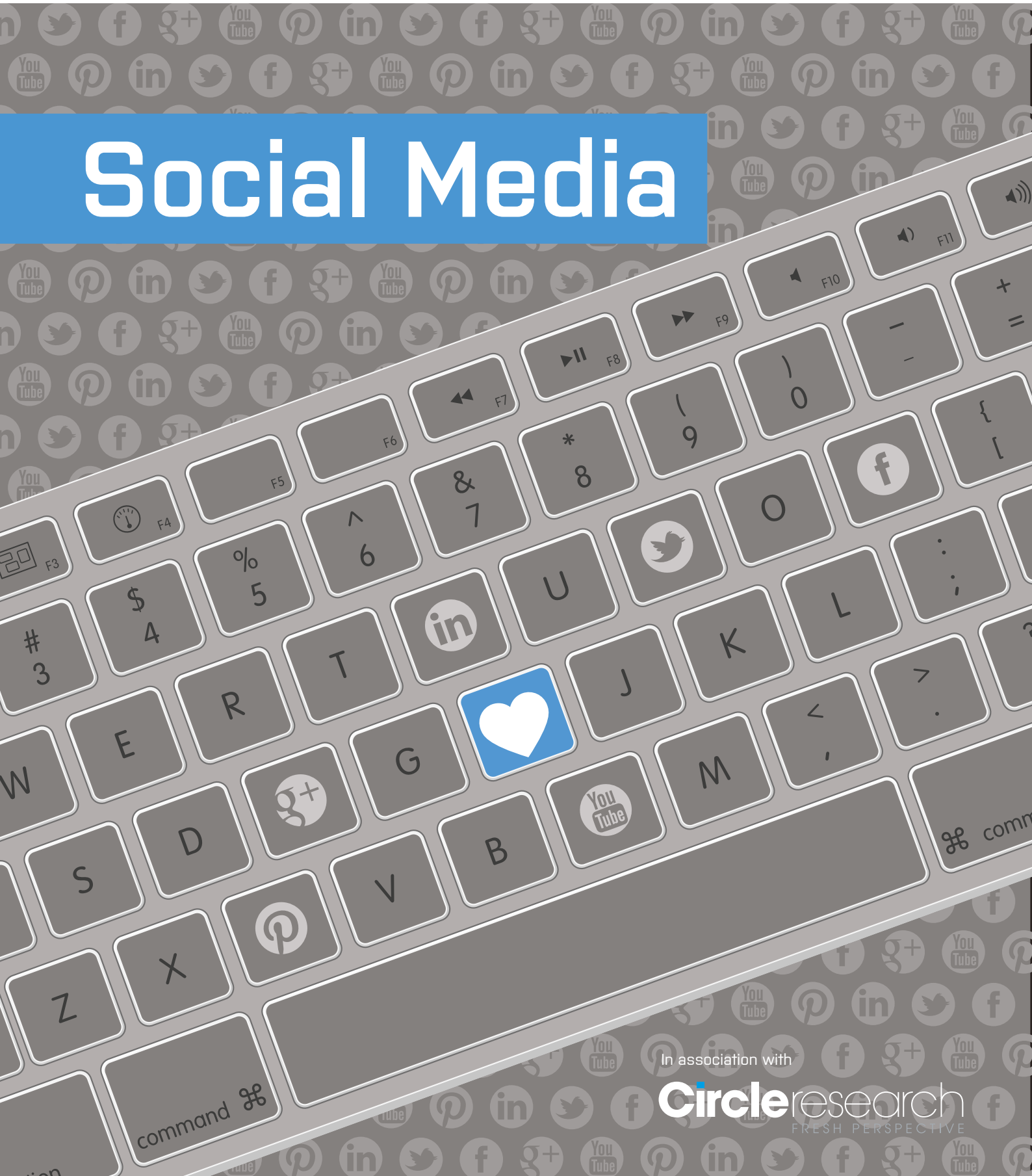
Benchmarking Report

Published April 2014
b2bmarketing.net

B2B Marketing™

Social Media



In association with

Circle research
FRESH PERSPECTIVE

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"Gone are the discussions where people question social's relevance. We are entering an era of analytics and a more professional approach to social activity"

Social: a maturing channel

Social media – perhaps the noisiest of all the digital developments that have served to transform the B2B landscape over the last 10 years – seems to be settling down.



ALEX ASPINALL
HEAD OF CONTENT
B2B MARKETING

Gone are the vast majority of discussions where people question its relevance in a business environment. And the fad-based platform shifts and the confusion regarding when exactly it's appropriate to use a hashtag are also both largely things of the past too. We are entering the era of analytics, ROI and a more rational and professional approach to social activity. There is a great deal about which to be optimistic.

But it would be overstating the case to claim universal advancement in B2B. For every marketer confidently digging deeply into social interactions, and for every organisation eagerly investing in the advanced platforms designed to join the dots, there remain those less able, or willing, to navigate the social maze.

This research uncovered a slightly confusing picture where, although the medium is clearly maturing and marketers are registering increasing confidence with the basics (platform selection, knowing what to share etc.), some boxes do remain unticked.

For example, the number of marketers working without recourse to social media guidelines remains a concern. And there still exists a worrying tendency in some quarters to regard social media as some distinct entity that sits away from the rest of the marketing mix. Though it goes without saying, the specific challenges and pressures serving to confuse the picture within any individual company are unique, these two shortcomings are perhaps the areas that most urgently need addressing in organisations struggling to adapt.

This report, spilt into three sections, attempts to locate a middle ground applicable to as many B2B organisations as possible. The first and third sections are designed to provide statistic-driven benchmarkable analysis, while the middle third focuses on the best practice learnings most applicable to the current state of B2B social media use.

"It looks as if LinkedIn is set to hold the lead as B2B marketers' favourite platform to promote their business"

Social media – a two horse race?

Social media is time consuming. The average B2B marketing department spends 17 per cent of its time on it. And if you believe in the wisdom of crowds (or self-fulfilling prophecies) then this report reveals where you're likely to get the best return on this effort. It seems that social media, in B2B at least, is a two horse race.



ANDREW DALGLISH
DIRECTOR
CIRCLE RESEARCH

In 2013 Twitter had the lead by a nose. Back then 85 per cent of B2B marketers using social media to promote their business, used Twitter to do so. This has risen to 89 per cent in 2014, but that's not been enough to hold off a strong push from LinkedIn which has galloped from behind and is now used by 94 per cent (in 2013 it was 82 per cent).

Importantly, it looks as if LinkedIn is set to hold this lead as the B2B marketer's favourite. When asked which one social network is most effective in supporting their marketing goals, almost half (45 per cent) picked LinkedIn. Just 20 per cent chose Twitter.

But hold on, who's this coming from behind? It's Google+. The young foal derided by some in its early days as fit only for the knacker's yard, has found its second wind. In 2013 just 36 per cent of B2B marketers used Google+, but in 2014 this has doubled to 61 per cent. Race goers should also be aware that the ground has changed.

In 2013 the going was relatively soft, with marketers using social media primarily to drive web traffic (56 per cent name as a primary goal) and build their brand position (55 per cent). Only 17 per cent could demonstrate ROI from their activity more than half of the time. But in 2014 the focus is on hard returns: 47 per cent now name 'lead generation' as a primary goal for social media (up from 36 per cent in 2013) – this is now the second most common goal behind only brand positioning (50 per cent in 2014). And in 2014, 29 per cent report that they can measure ROI more often than not.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats. Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0)20 7438 1370

About Circle Research

Circle Research uses market research to help clients solve business issues, grasp opportunities and develop competitive advantage. The average client engages Circle Research on more than four projects, and counting. Here's why:

- The B2B market research experts – understanding your sector and seeing things others miss.
- Multi-award winning – benefit from extensive experience and best-in-class approach.
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Call Andrew Dalglish, director at Circle on +44 (0) 20 7960 3802 or email him on andrew.dalglish@circle-research.com

About this report

Aims and objectives

The *Social Media Benchmarking Report* highlights social media trends in B2B organisations based on an exclusive research project. The report was produced by B2B Marketing, in association with Circle Research.

Structure

This report is split into three main sections – section one focuses on the key findings from the survey, and provides context for the data in this section. Section two focuses on the consequent action and takeaways marketers should concentrate on to improve their marketing. The appendix includes information on who responded to the survey, in addition to a comprehensive list of at-a-glance charts relating to questions in the survey.

Methodology

The questions for this report were devised by B2B Marketing and Circle Research. An online survey was conducted in March 2014, with 288 client-side marketers completing it. The analysis was written by Alex Aspinall, head of content at B2B Marketing.

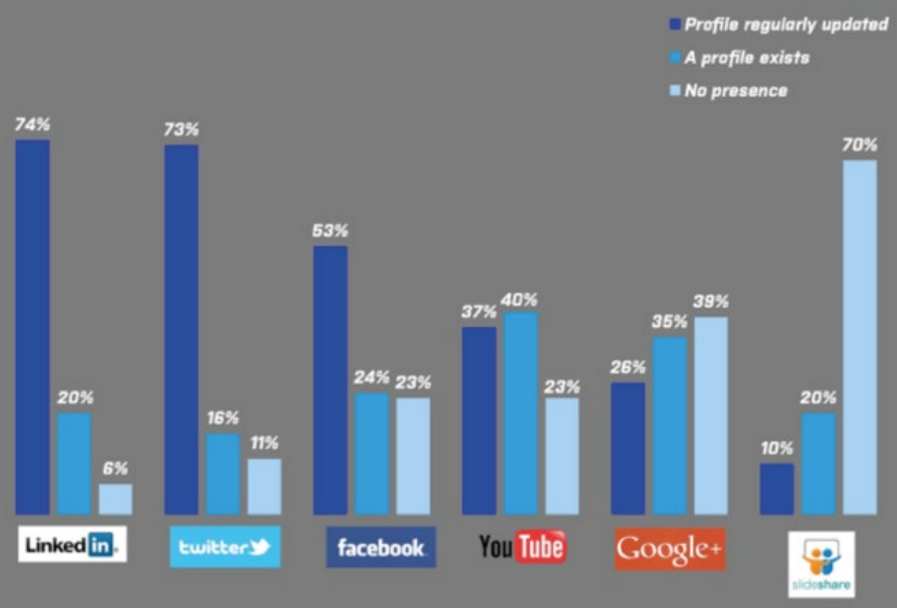
Membership

This benchmarking report is part of a regular programme of similar reports produced by B2B Marketing on current issues and trends affecting B2B marketers in all sectors. For more information about these reports, or to browse other recent publications, go to b2bmarketing.net/resources.

Key findings

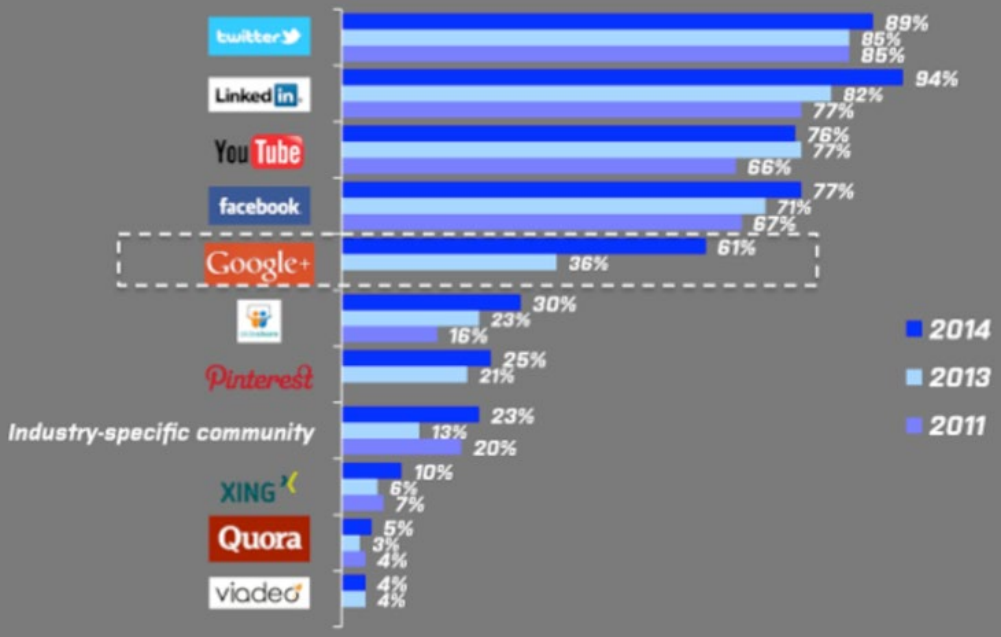
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Figure 1. Most used social networks



Question: What's the extent of your organisation's presence on the following networks?

Figure 2. Change in company presence on social networks



Question: What's the extent of your organisation's presence on the following networks?

1. Platforms

Twitter has lost its crown as B2B marketing's most used social media platform. Though the percentage swing isn't radical, the move towards LinkedIn can be seen as significant, especially when placed in the context of this report's wider trends.

In 2014, 74 per cent of B2B organisations have a regularly updated presence on LinkedIn, 20 per cent have a profile that isn't updated and only six per cent have no presence. For Twitter these numbers are 73 per cent regularly update, 16 per cent have a profile and 11 per cent aren't on the platform. Meanwhile, over on Facebook 53 per cent claim a regularly updated profile, 24 per cent have profiles but don't regularly update them and a similar figure – 23 per cent – have no profile at all.

The change at the top of the pecking order is attributable to several things. Firstly, as Twitter penetration has been significant among B2B organisations for some time there was less land to grab. However, it's likely that the continual additions and adjustments being made to LinkedIn – many of which see it now offering something of a professionally-focused mixture between Twitter and Facebook – have made LinkedIn an increasingly attractive prospect for B2B brands looking to leverage real business returns from their social contributions.

Overall, 94 per cent of our respondents said their organisations had a presence on LinkedIn, while 89 per cent had company profiles on Twitter, 77 per cent had Facebook accounts, 77 per cent were on YouTube and 61 per cent had profiles on Google+. This last point is particularly interesting.

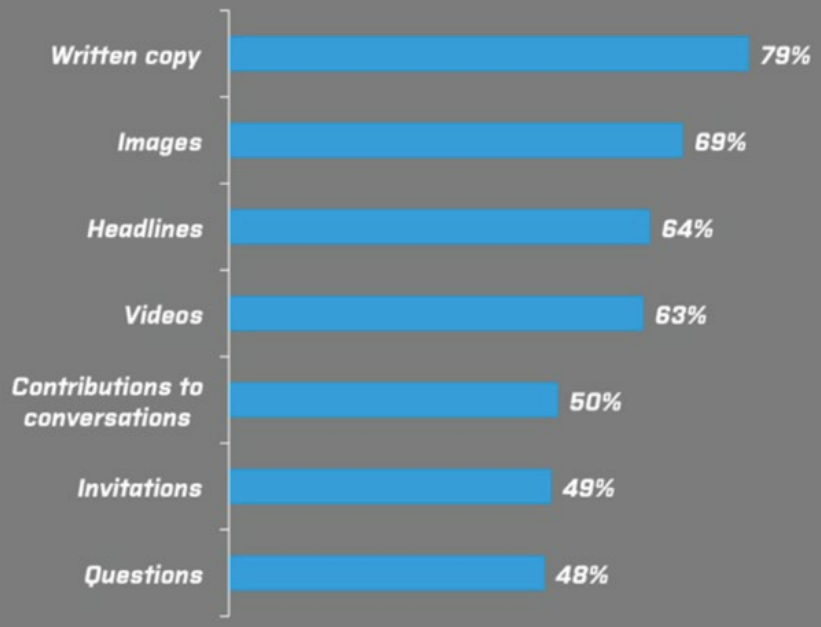
In last year's *Social Media Benchmarking Report*, while only a relatively low per cent of respondents reported that their organisation had a presence on Google+, almost a third (29 per cent) stated that they expected Google+ to become one of the most useful social platforms for B2B marketing. So, has this come to pass?

The well-documented links between Google+ and SERP success can be seen to have fuelled impressive Google+ use growth among B2B organisations. It is the social platform to have seen the highest level of increased use among B2B brands over the last 12 months. In 2013, only 36 per cent of respondents claimed their organisation had a presence on the platform, while this year that figure was 61 per cent.

Though this growth is impressive, it still leaves 39 per cent of B2B brands without Google+ profiles; the highest by some way among the main four platforms. Additionally, as referenced in the chapter looking at objectives, Google+ still has some way to go before it starts delivering on that effectiveness prediction made last year (see figure 6, page 16).

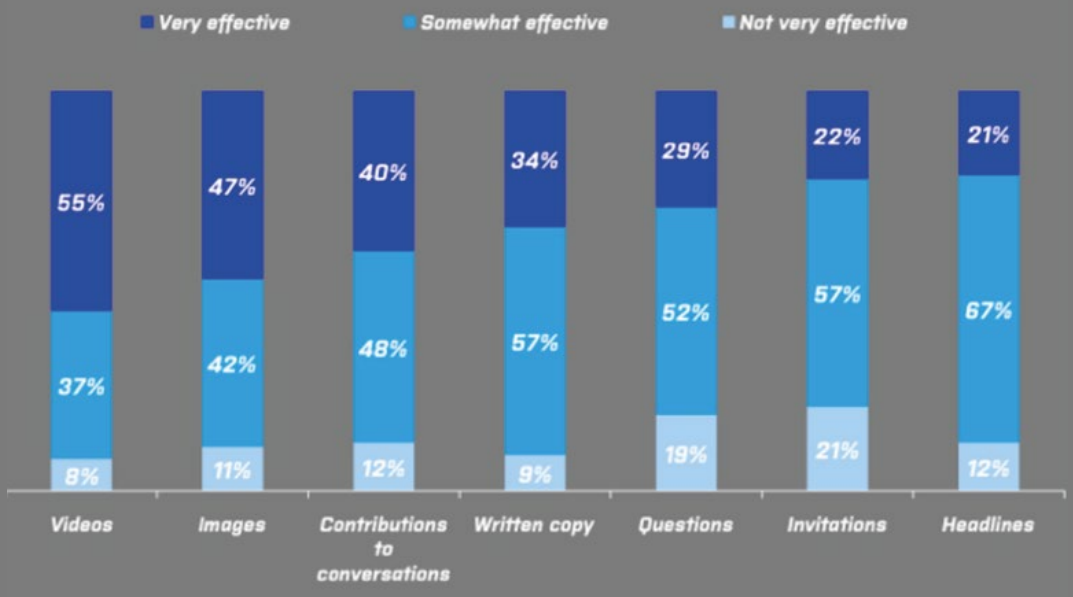
In conclusion, it's fair to say social media use is increasing across the board. This is particularly true among the bigger platforms, with year-on-year increased use of LinkedIn being reported by 75 per cent of respondents and increased Twitter use reported by 70 per cent. Facebook use is up for 55 per cent, Google+ use up for 53 per cent, YouTube use up for 48 per cent and Pinterest use up for 45 per cent year-on-year.

Figure 3. What brands are sharing on social media



Question: Which of the following types of content does your organisation post on social media?

Figure 4. Most successful content



Question: How effective do you find each type of post?

2. Content

There's a dangerous tendency in some organisations to look at social media as something distinct, rather than as an integrated part of the marketing whole. It's therefore useful to gain some insight into exactly what marketers are sharing on their social platforms of choice.

In terms of what B2B brands are posting via their social media accounts, written copy is – perhaps by default – top of the list, used by 79 per cent of respondents, images are the second most popular content format (posted by 69 per cent of respondents), headlines are shared by 64 per cent, and videos by 63 per cent.

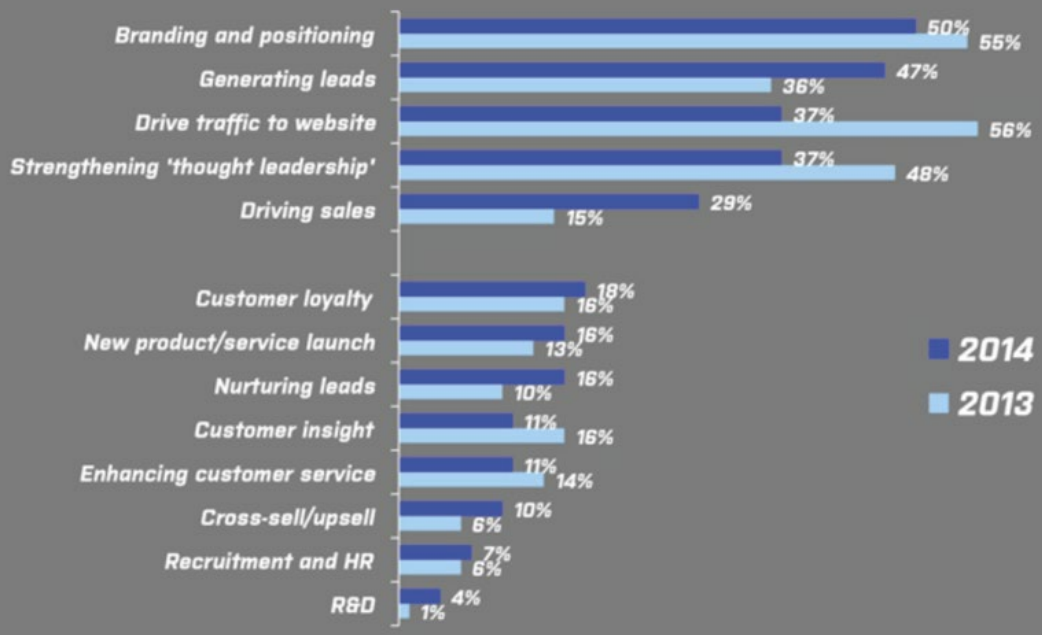
These figures are largely in line with last year's report, which saw video, short text and images taking the top three spots. This is a clear sign marketers are now well versed in how they should be using social media, as well as confident regarding what type of content resonates well with their target audiences.

That said however, a gulf exists between the most widely used content types and the ones regarded as being most effective by respondents. Unsurprisingly, and in line with wider social media trends, posts containing video and images tend to be rated as being more effective.

Video content was regarded as being 'very effective' by 55 per cent of respondents, while images were regarded similarly by 47 per cent. 'Contributing to conversations' was regarded as being the third most effective use of social media platforms, regarded as being very effective by 40 per cent. It's interesting to note that while videos were easily the most effective content types, only 63 per cent of respondents were sharing them via social media. Somewhat surprisingly, only 29 per cent said asking questions was 'very effective'.

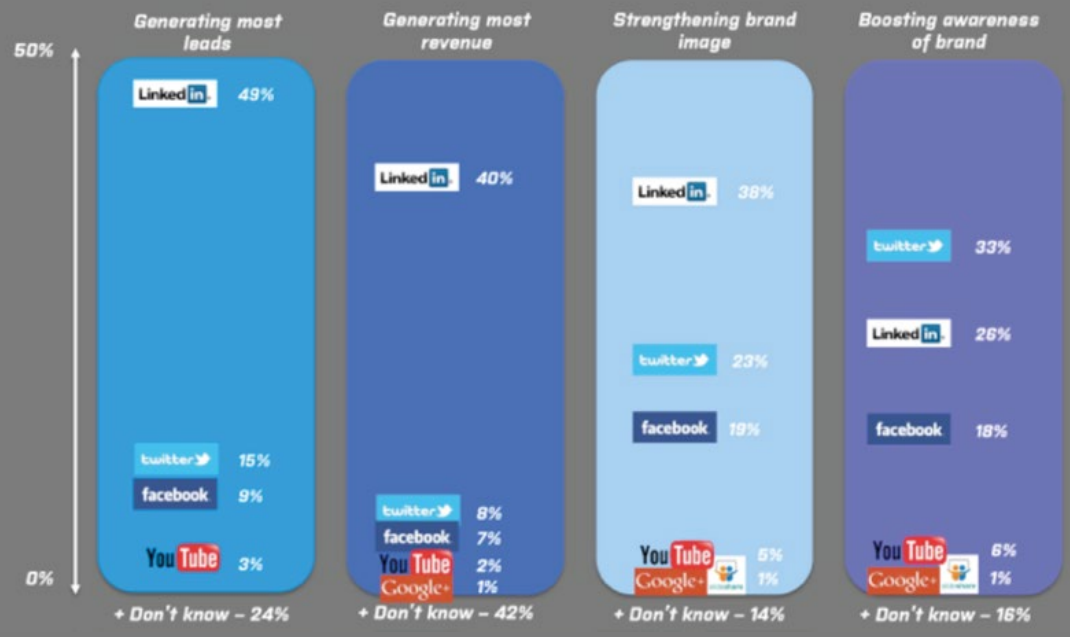
The fact images and video resonate well on social platforms should come as a surprise to relatively few marketers. Indeed, most of the major social platforms have made functionality changes designed to encourage greater image sharing in recent times. This belief in imagery is also supported by recent research from Twitter, which suggested tweets containing images received, on average, 35 per cent more retweets than posts containing just text.

Figure 5. Social media objectives



Question: Which three would you say are the most important objectives for your organisation?

Figure 6. Best performing platforms



Question: Which social media platform do you think is most effective at generating leads, generating most revenue, strengthening brand image and boosting brand awareness?

3. Objectives

Even the most cursory examination of this year's data clearly reveals there has been a significant change in what marketers are looking to get out of the time they spend on social media. While 'branding and positioning' was the most-selected top three social media objective (chosen by 50 per cent of respondents – down by five per cent from 2013), there has been a significant swing away from lighter concepts of brand and thought leadership towards more strategic and business-focused objectives.

Following hot on the heels of 'branding and positioning,' was 'generating leads' (selected by 47 per cent of respondents, up 11 per cent from 2013), 'driving website traffic' (selected by 37 per cent, down from the top spot and 56 per cent last year), 'strengthening thought leadership' (selected by 37 per cent, down by 11 per cent from 2013), and 'driving sales' (selected by 29 per cent, up 14 per cent from 2013).

These figures show a clear movement towards leads and sales, and perhaps even hint at the increasing emphasis being placed both on sales and marketing alignment and on marketing having to justify its contribution to the business as a whole in ways previously not expected.

The fourteen per cent increase in respondents selecting 'driving sales' as a top three social media objective, and the 11 per cent increase in those selecting lead generation were complemented by 16 per cent selecting 'lead nurturing' (10 per cent in 2013) and 10 per cent selecting 'cross/up-sell' (six per cent in 2013).

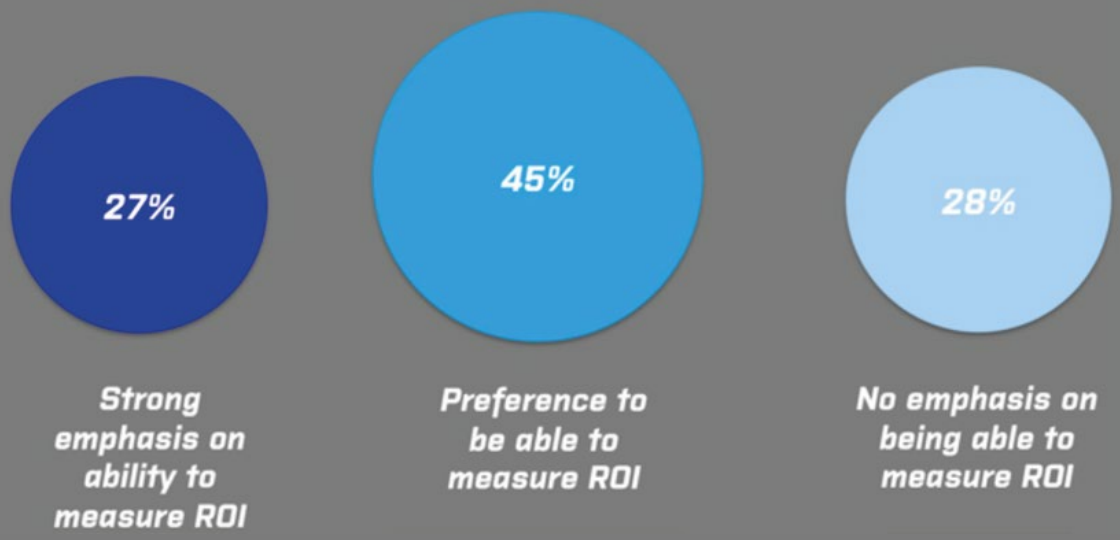
When it comes to choosing which social platforms help deliver these objectives, there is what could be seen as a rather surprising level of agreement. When asked which social network is most effective in helping marketers realise their objectives, 45 per cent selected LinkedIn.

Twitter was in second place with 20 per cent, Facebook third with 11 per cent, YouTube down in fourth, with five per cent and 'industry-specific networks' was in fifth, with three per cent. Meanwhile only one per cent selected Pinterest, five per cent reported that none of them were effective, and 11 per cent admitted they didn't know which platform best met their needs. This is very honest, but could also do with being addressed, as it's clear these marketers are failing to maximise their returns.

These statistics make great reading for LinkedIn. It came out as the most effective platform for generating leads, generating revenue and strengthening brand image. Only in terms of its ability to 'boost brand awareness' did any other platform (Twitter) receive more favourable feedback.

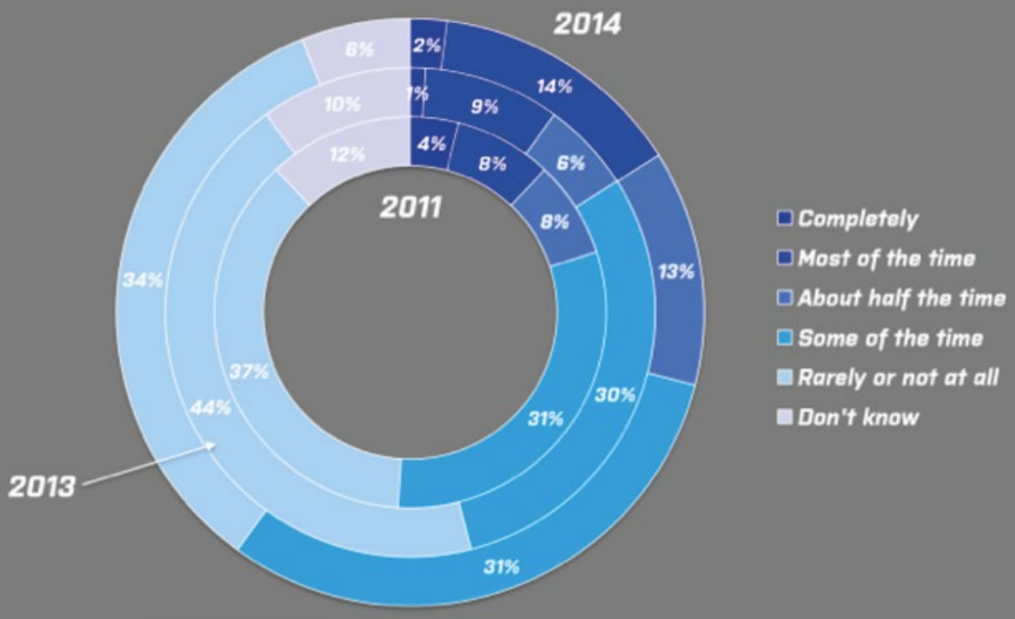
As a side note, it's worth highlighting how few people selected Google+ as being the most effective platform. It did not receive more than one per cent of the vote on any of the four objective areas. These figures serve to throw into question the predictions our respondents made in 2013, when 29 per cent of respondents bought into the idea that Google+ would have become one of the three most useful B2B social media platforms over the last 12 months.

Figure 7. Emphasis on ROI



Question: To what extent does your senior management team want social media activity to demonstrate ROI?

Figure 8. Demonstrable social media ROI



Question: To what extent would you say you can demonstrate ROI from your social media activity?

4. ROI

Return on investment is the perennial focus for B2B marketers seeking to ensure their efforts are regarded as contributing something critical to the organisations in which they work. In too many cases the marketing function is regarded – either through its own fault or because of wider precedent – to be a cost centre rather than a profit-making entity. And few areas of marketing are less aligned, on the surface at least, with the pound signs discussed around the board table than social media.

With this in mind, the ROI section of this year's report opened by seeking to understand what level of importance was associated with delivering an ROI specifically for social media activities. The answers were fairly mixed. Twenty-seven per cent said there was a 'strong emphasis on social ROI' in their organisation, a majority of 45 per cent said there was a 'preference for social ROI' present, while 28 per cent said there was no emphasis on being able to measure ROI on social media activities in their organisation.

So, with these varying emphasises in mind, how well are B2B organisations doing when it comes to calculating exactly what they are getting in return for their contributions to the social world?

They seem to be getting better at it, would be a fair answer. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents reported being able to calculate the ROI of their social media activity 'at least half of the time'. This figure is a significant improvement from the 16 per cent of respondents claiming a similar level of sophistication in last year's report. Whether this is because of increasing understanding, technology implementation or a greater emphasis being placed on ROI within individual organisations is unclear. But if it continues to be the trend in the future, it can only be a positive.

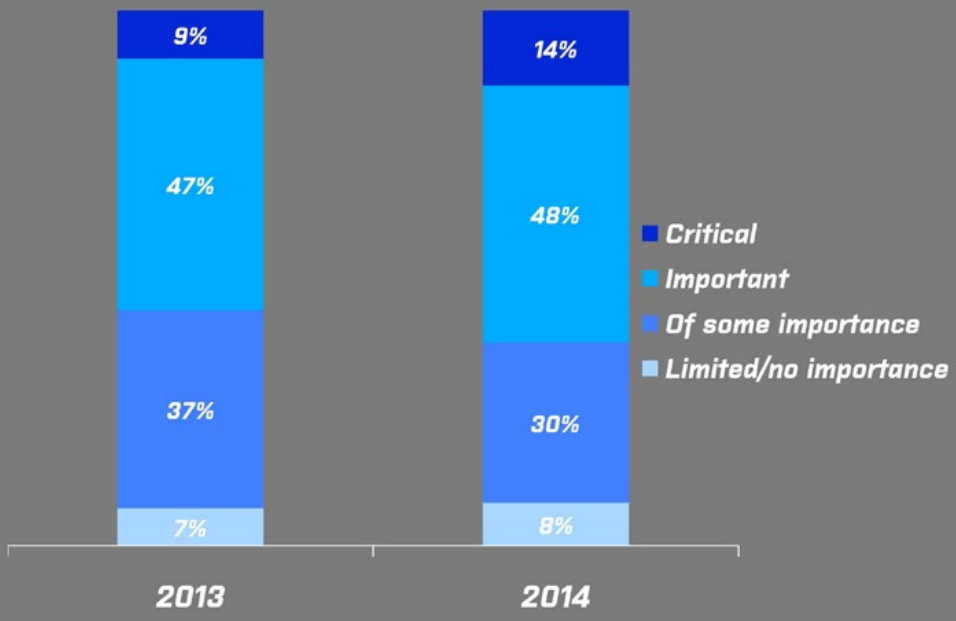
Of course, exactly how each marketer and each organisation measures success will vary on a case-to-case basis, but it is interesting to look for general industry trends. 'Website visits' is still the most-selected 'top three success metric,' chosen by 56 per cent of respondents (down from 58 per cent in 2013). 'Interactions' was the second most-selected, with 49 per cent, but there is no comparison data available here for last year.

The most significant year-on-year increase was 'leads generated'. This was the third most-selected top-three metric, chosen by 44 per cent (an eight per cent increase compared to 2013). It was also interesting to note there was a general decrease in the number of people placing emphasis on lighter vanity metrics. The number of respondents selecting 'follower count' as a top three social media metric was down by six per cent, which is a positive trend. 'Interactions' seems to have taken over where more basic concepts of social amplification once dominated.

When it comes to KPIs associated directly to social media activities – and it's worth pointing out that only 22 per cent of our respondents had social-specific KPIs in place – we see a mixture of vanity metrics and more business-focused observations jostling for relevance. 'Likes and followers' was the most selected KPI (selected by 45 per cent), 'leads generated/conversion rate' was selected by 38 per cent, 'interactions' by 35 per cent and 'website traffic/metrics' by 29 per cent.

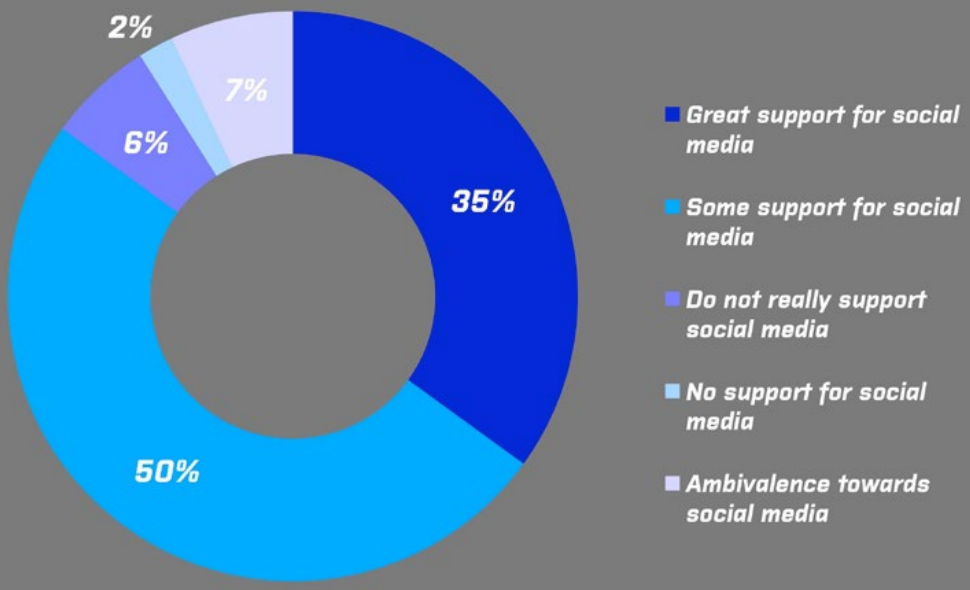
It's clear there are very varied levels of social media sophistication in place in B2B organisations. Though, by means of positive conclusion, there does seem to be a definite trend towards improved performance and a desire to tie social media efforts in with wider business objectives.

Figure 9. **Resistance to social**



Question: **To what extent does your senior management team support the use of social media in marketing?**

Figure 10. **Social media importance**



Question: **How important a part of your marketing activity is social media?**

5. Culture

It is very much worth highlighting that the main analysis section of this report is dealing with generalities and averages based on the responses provided by the mid- to senior-level B2B marketers that make up our survey respondent pool. While there are relevant commonalities and trends, there are also – clearly – situations and pressures unique to each marketer and organisation in which they work that render mass conclusions rather difficult.

One of these areas, as applicable to social media, is certainly the culture present within the organisation. Indeed, the cultural approach taken by any given organisation towards social media will have had a profound effect on the responses provided by the people representing it. For this reason, and as an attempt to provide a background narrative regarding how marketers are tasked with approaching social media, we included a series of questions focusing on culture in the benchmarking report survey. The results it returned painted a rather confused picture in some cases.

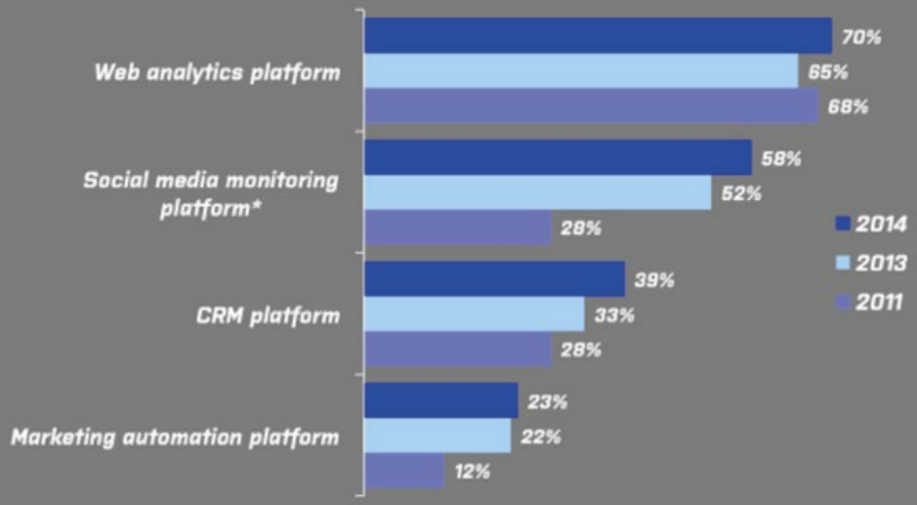
The easiest conclusion from this section is that social media has well and truly gone mainstream. Only 15 per cent of respondents reported that they did not receive support regarding their social media efforts within their organisations from senior management teams.

Similarly, the number of respondents describing social media as being an 'important' element of their marketing activity' has increased over the last 12 months. Sixty-two per cent of respondents described social media as 'critical' or 'important' this year, compared to only 56 per cent last year. It's clear the voices decrying social media as irrelevant in B2B are growing ever more silent. That said, eight per cent still described social media as being either of 'limited or no importance'. It's likely these companies are finding social success more difficult to come by. This could be because of industry-specific issues but there is also likely to be an element of 'chicken and egg' at play in some instances.

The question on social media guidelines returned unexpected, and slightly confusing, results. According to our respondents, there has been an 11 per cent decrease in the number of marketers working with social media guidelines covering areas such as tone of voice and brand etiquette. This is somewhat unexpected, and there are various possible explanations for this, ranging from an anomalous return in the survey, through to marketers becoming more confident regarding what they should be doing on social media.

With reference to the respondents that do have experience with social media guidelines, there is an overwhelming level of positivity regarding their role. Seventy-five per cent described social media guidelines as conducive to enabling good quality social media content; a strong indicator that it's for the best to have such guidelines in place.

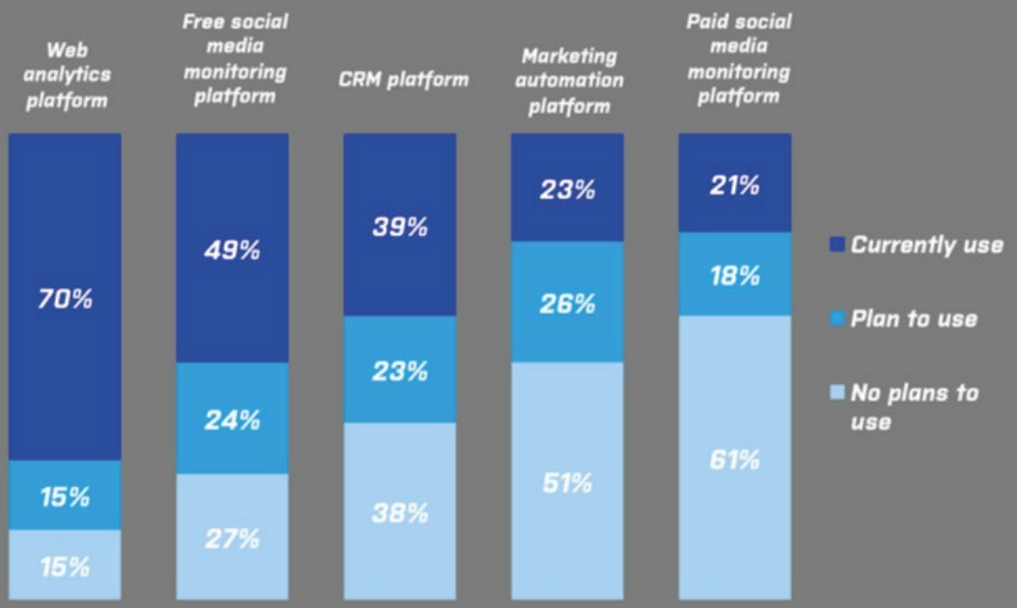
Figure 11. Tracking technology usage



*To allow comparison to 2011, all respondents who use either paid or free social monitoring media platforms have been included in this measure

Question: Do you currently use or plan to use any technology to help track the effectiveness of your social media?

Figure 12. Technology used to track effectiveness



Question: Do you currently use or plan to use any technology to help track the effectiveness of your social media?

6. Technology

In line with the general professionalisation of social media marketing noted throughout this report, there is an increased use of technology to accompany and inform social media activities. While these increases are not overly significant in terms of specific percentage increases, the trend is uniform across solutions.

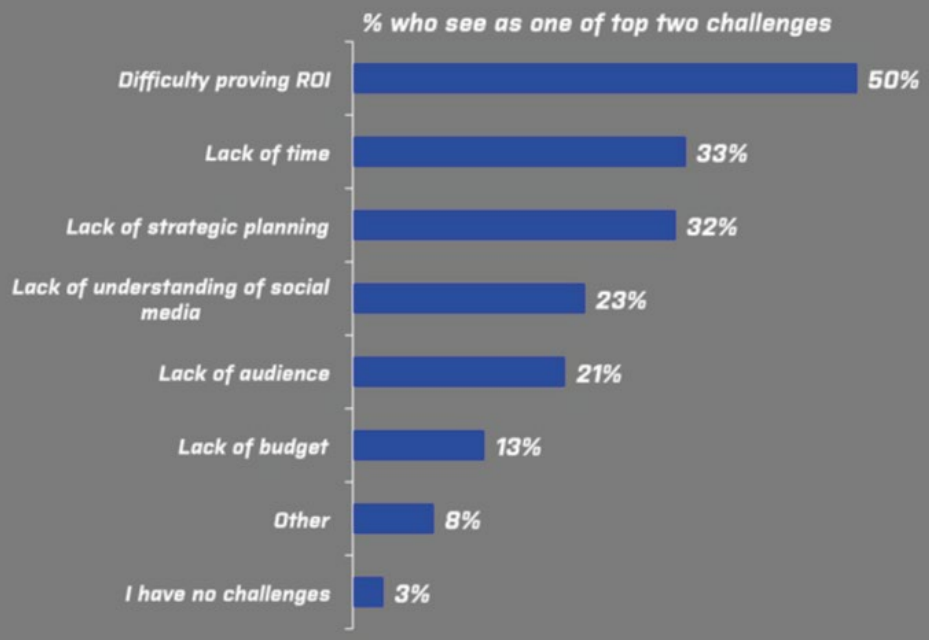
Seventy per cent of respondents are using web analytics platforms to assess the impact of their social media activity (up five per cent in 12 months), 58 per cent are using social media monitoring platforms (up 30 per cent in the last three years), 39 per cent are using a CRM platform in conjunction with social activity (up six per cent since 2013), and marketing automation use is also up, though by only one per cent year-on-year.

The fact that so many technology solutions are being incorporated into day-to-day social activity is clearly a sign B2B brands are taking social media more seriously, that they are looking to maximise their investments and they are actively investing time and budget into making it work.

Looking specifically at social media monitoring platforms, almost half of our respondents (49 per cent) claimed to be using them to help track effectiveness. This figure is up five per cent year-on-year. It's notable, however, that the number using paid-for solutions is significantly less; 21 per cent, though this figure is three per cent up compared to 2013 research.

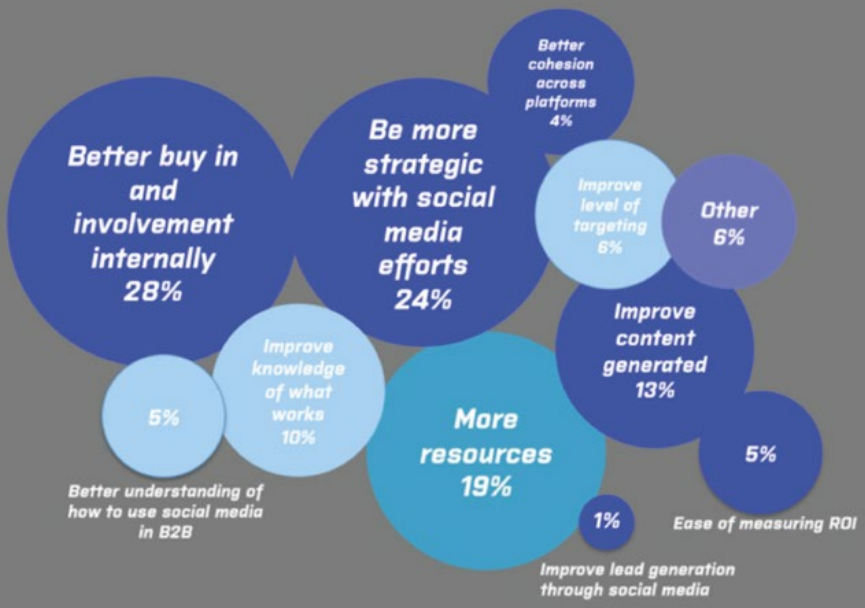
This tech adoption shows no signs of slowing. Of the respondents not currently using these solutions, sizeable chunks are planning to implement use in the future. Half of respondents not currently using web analytics plan to start doing so, while 26 per cent of the entire respondent pool stated they plan to start using marketing automation. It will be interesting to track the development of this space in future reports.

Figure 13. Key challenges



Question: Please select the top two challenges you face in relation to social media

Figure 14. Changes that could improve social activity



Question: Is there anything you feel could be done differently to improve the impact of your social media activity?

7. Challenges and improvements

There can be little doubt that social media is an increasingly mature space in B2B marketing circles. The movement away from vanity metrics and the wider adoption of technology solutions flagged previously neatly prove this theory. However, it would require a significant misreading of the results to conclude that marketers are as comfortable with social as they are with better-established channels and platforms. Significant challenges and areas for improvement remain.

When asked to report directly on the top two challenges respondents face when it comes to their social media activity, 50 per cent flagged a common foe: difficulty in proving ROI. Though the B2B world is regularly regarded as being overly obsessed with breaking down all activity into ratios and ROI calculations, that so many B2B marketers are now seeking to quantify the contributions of their social media efforts once again signifies a commitment to facilitating wider business success rather than isolated marketing achievement.

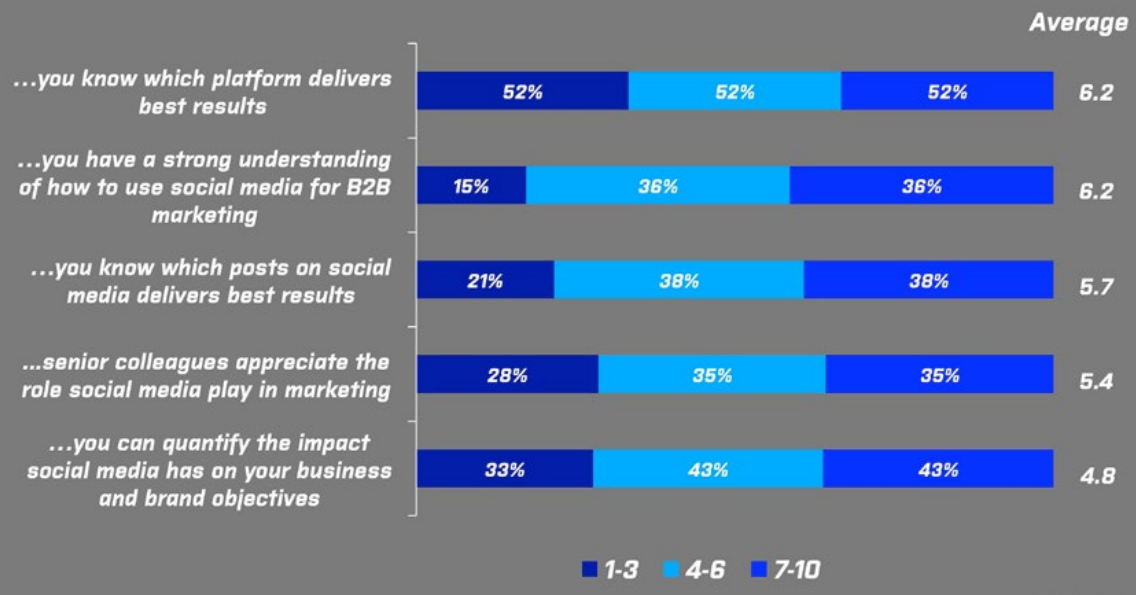
Where this argument does fall down slightly, however, is if the pursuit of social ROI is prioritised at the expense of integrated thinking. The value of ascribing ROI figures to social-specific activities decreases if it means social is regarded as an area distinct from wider campaign and brand success. If social media has played an important role in the success of a wider multichannel campaign, there's a case to argue that an obsession with exactly how much value is offered by any individual tweet is slightly missing the point.

Other widely flagged challenges were lack of time (selected by 33 per cent as a top two challenge), lack of strategic planning (32 per cent), lack of social media understanding (23 per cent) and lack of audience (21 per cent). Interestingly, and congratulations should go to these people, three per cent reported they faced no challenges in relation to their social media activities.

In terms of how respondents felt their social media efforts could be improved, there was a great variety of responses, which – again – reflect the varying pressures individual marketers face. The most commonly selected response (28 per cent) was 'better buy in and involvement internally,' suggesting that despite the generally favourable reports regarding support for social media in most organisations, there is still room for improvement. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) suggested that adopting a 'more strategic approach' to social media would help, while 19 per cent wanted access to greater resources and 13 per cent reflected that if they were able to improve the quality of the content they were sharing their social performance would improve. Other less frequently selected areas for improvement included gaining better understanding, better targeting and better integration.

Figure 15. Social media confidence levels

Question: On a scale of 1-10 (10 being very), how confident are you that...



8. Confidence barometer

For the first time this year, we included a series of questions seeking to assess the levels of confidence B2B marketers have when it comes to various key elements of representing their organisations on social channels. This inclusion was made for a number of reasons; specifically because it provides us with the opportunity to cross reference previous findings and contradictions, and also because the format of the confidence barometer allows practitioners to directly benchmark confidence levels across the industry on an individual basis.

It's interesting to note that while the main body of the report clearly paints a picture of social as a maturing space, with which marketers appear to be growing increasingly comfortable, our confidence barometer suggests confidence levels may be slightly lower than some statistics may lead you to believe.

The areas in which marketers felt most confident in their social media skills was their belief that they knew which platforms delivered the best results for their organisation and their belief that they knew how to use social media for B2B marketing. Respondents were more likely to give themselves higher marks out of 10 in these two categories than in any of the other areas covered. Around 50 per cent of respondents gave themselves 'seven or above' out of 10 for each of these areas (though the mean average was actually nearer 6.2).

The areas in which less confidence was registered were the degree to which 'senior colleagues appreciated the role played by social media,' where an average score of 5.4 was recorded, and marketers' confidence in their ability to 'quantify the impact social media has on business and brand objectives'. This latter discipline scored an average of only 4.8 out of 10, and paints a very clear picture of what B2B marketers are currently struggling with most when it comes to social media activities.

The quest to show quantifiable social media impact is likely to remain a challenging issue for some time to come but – in need of a positive conclusion on the matter – the fact that marketers are thinking in these terms is sign of progression in itself.

Key learnings

2

"How do you go about giving the customer what they want when it comes to content? You have to think like a publisher"

1. Be where your audience is

Apart from for the largest brands, with the resources to experiment extensively for the sake of it, it's vital time spent on social media is not wasted. After all, despite what some less well-informed commentators may have you believe, social media is neither free, nor particularly cheap. A basic element of ensuring you get the returns you need involves concentrating on the right platforms. And this means being where your audience is.

In the case of many of the respondents that took part in this research, this seems to mean LinkedIn. As the platform most selected for delivering against marketing objectives, it makes sense for B2B marketers to ensure their use of this platform is up to scratch. That said, it's important to remember that it's your customers that should dictate your social engagement strategy. There's no point in doing loads on LinkedIn if your target market wants to engage via Pinterest. Admittedly that is unlikely in B2B, but the point still stands. And remember that it is unlikely one platform is going to be enough in isolation.

2. Give them what they want

Once you're confident you have a meaningful presence in the places your target audience are most likely to be responsive to your messages, it's time to start thinking about what exactly you're going to share with them. This is even more important than being in the right place because it is very easy to turn people off. Once someone presses 'unfollow' it's very hard to get them back.

So, how do you go about giving the customer what they want when it comes to content? You have to think like a publisher. Publishers tend to get by with recourse to a mixture of gut instinct and customer insight. Gut instinct in this instance should translate to the fact that, as an expert in your field, your organisation is capable of producing the kind of content potential customers will want to consume. But it's the 'customer insight' element in which marketers can really hone the content they're sharing, and add extra value. By examining the digital footprints left behind by website visitors and social interactions, it should become clear what people are after. You can also go straight to the horse's mouth too for a bit of audience research. However you go about it, though, there is no excuse for wasting peoples' time with irrelevant content.

3. Set objectives

Of course, you don't want to be wasting your own time either. So it's very important to set objectives related to your social media activities. The fact only 55 per cent of respondents described their organisation's social media use as being carried out strategically, suggests a sizeable chunk of B2B organisations could be doing more when it comes to their approach to this channel. Social activity needs to be carried out as the result of a considered approach. Do not mistake the informal nature of the social space as an excuse for unstructured stabbing into the social arena.

It's vitally important marketing is engaging in social media activity with a specific set of end goals in mind. Without knowing what you are trying to achieve, assessing whether you are going in the right direction (and ultimately, securing the credit you'll deserve) will be impossible. Wherever possible, these objectives should be set using words that resonate with the business as a whole. Social media specifics and vanity metrics are of interest to a very limited number of serious business people.

4. Get integrated

Among the most obvious key takeaways drawn from this report is that social media is a maturing channel. In many ways it has settled: platform use, agreement regarding what works, technology adoption and confidence in personal use are all classic indicators. However, despite this, there remains a commonly held view that social media is somehow distinct from the other

"In an environment as fluid as social, you should continually question and evaluate how best to go about things"

areas of the marketing mix. It is important to try and quantify the value generated from time spent on social media. And the number of leaders eager to assess social's ROI is understandable. But it is perhaps more healthy to concentrate on social's contribution to the success of wider projects. Nothing exists in isolation in the marketing mix.

With this in mind, it's important to try and assess the success of KPI metrics and ROI figures as part of the wider reporting of marketing success. Wherever possible marketers should be thinking in integrated terms. This should include channel integration as well as departmental integration. Look at the success of campaigns rather than breaking everything down into channels and arguments based on 'sales versus marketing'. Your customers do not differentiate, and neither – where possible – should you.

5. Follow social brand guidelines

Regardless of the explanation for the reported drop in marketers working in accordance with social media guidelines, the fact remains that a significant number of brands either do not have social media guidelines in place, or are failing to ensure their representatives are aware of, and using, them. The average marketer should not really require an explanation about why it's better to have social guidelines in place: it's like a journalist not working to a house style guide, or – indeed – a marketer carrying out brand work without knowing what colour the logo needs to be.

Social guidelines are there to make social media marketing easier. They should help inform tone of voice and ensure as many people as is desirable are equipped to represent the brand in the social space. If your organisation does not have any in place, write them or encourage others to do so. If you do have social media guidelines in place already it may be worth reviewing them, and ensuring that everyone is aware of their existence. It's important to foster a culture of contribution and collaboration, so everyone feels included in your organisation's social presence.

6. Ask the right questions

One thing most marketers can agree on is that there is a lack of time in the day. But it stands to reason that the real nitty gritty of the challenges each individual marketer faces is – to a lesser or greater extent – unique to their personal situation. For this reason it makes sense to step back and assess exactly what is and isn't working with regards to your social media activity. There is often a tendency to do things because they have always been done a certain way, but in an environment as fluid as social, you should seek to continually question and evaluate how best to go about things. Including as many people as are relevant in this process will probably throw up new perspectives and new solutions.

7. Embrace technology

It won't have escaped your attention that the amount of technology solutions purporting to help you manage your social media activities has increased significantly over the last couple of years. There are solutions to suit all budgets, company sizes, personal roles and objectives, but it pays to ensure you take the time to assess which products will really deliver the added value you're looking for. Start with your objectives and work backwards from there. There is almost certainly a technology platform somewhere that will make your life easier, you just need to figure out what you need before rushing in and getting blinded by case studies and comparison tables.

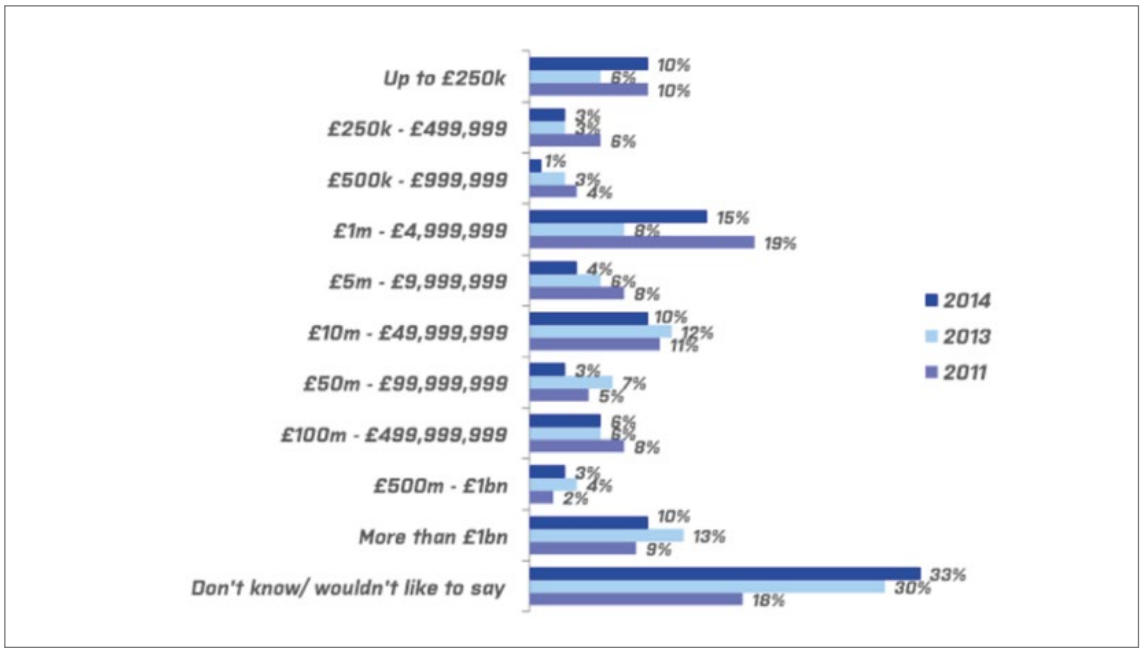
8. Seek out training opportunities

Though social media is clearly settling down as a marketing channel, it is still part of the wider digital proliferation of communications and, as such, is subject to changes and epoch shifts that sometimes seem to come overnight. It can be confusing. The good news is that, regardless of your status, age or experience with social media, there is a plethora of training and support resources open to marketers looking to do more with their social media time. Whether they are inhouse or external, free or paid-for, all marketers should keep an eye on their own personal development needs. After all, no one wants to get left behind.

Appendix: Full survey results

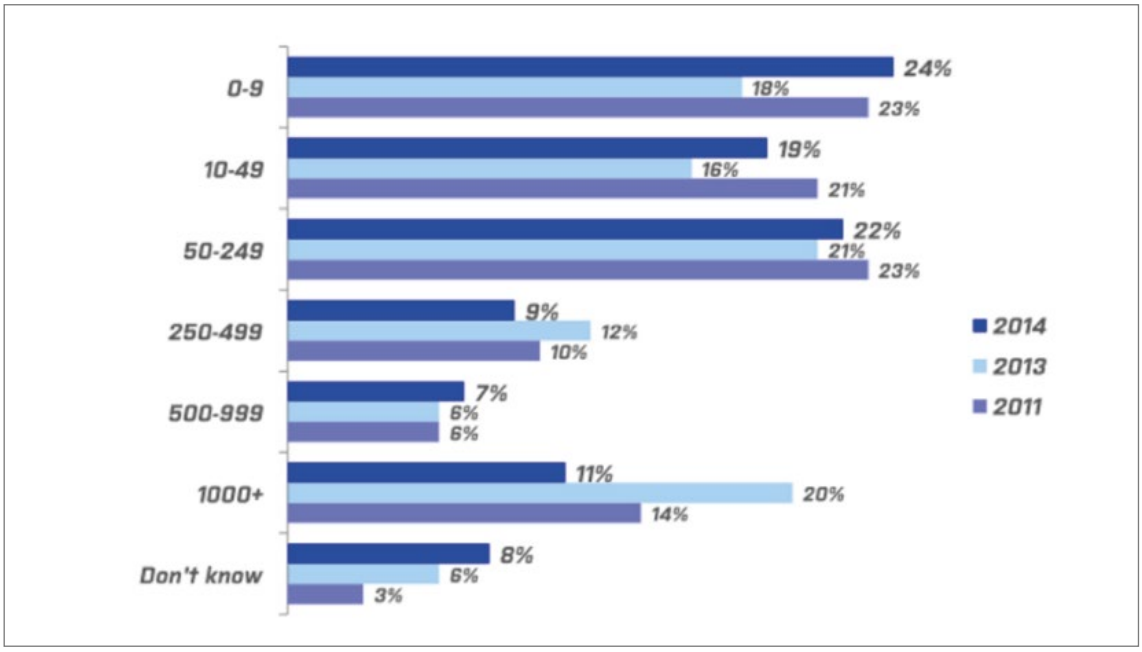
3

Figure 1. Organisations' annual turnover



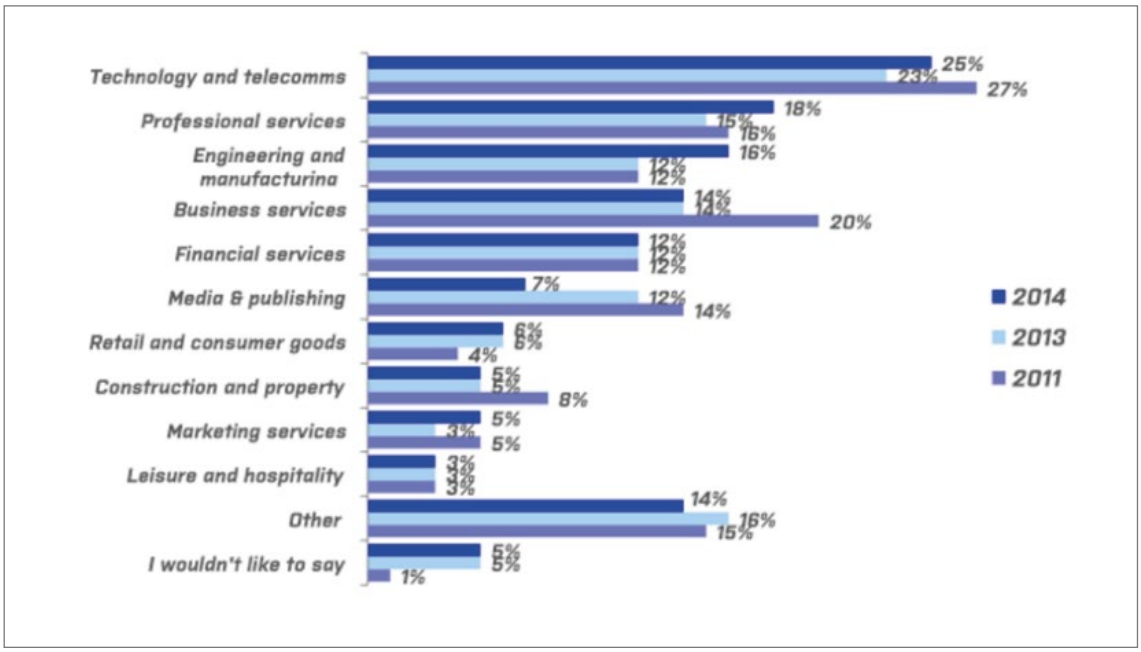
Question: What's the annual turnover of your organisation?

Figure 2. Number of employees in the UK



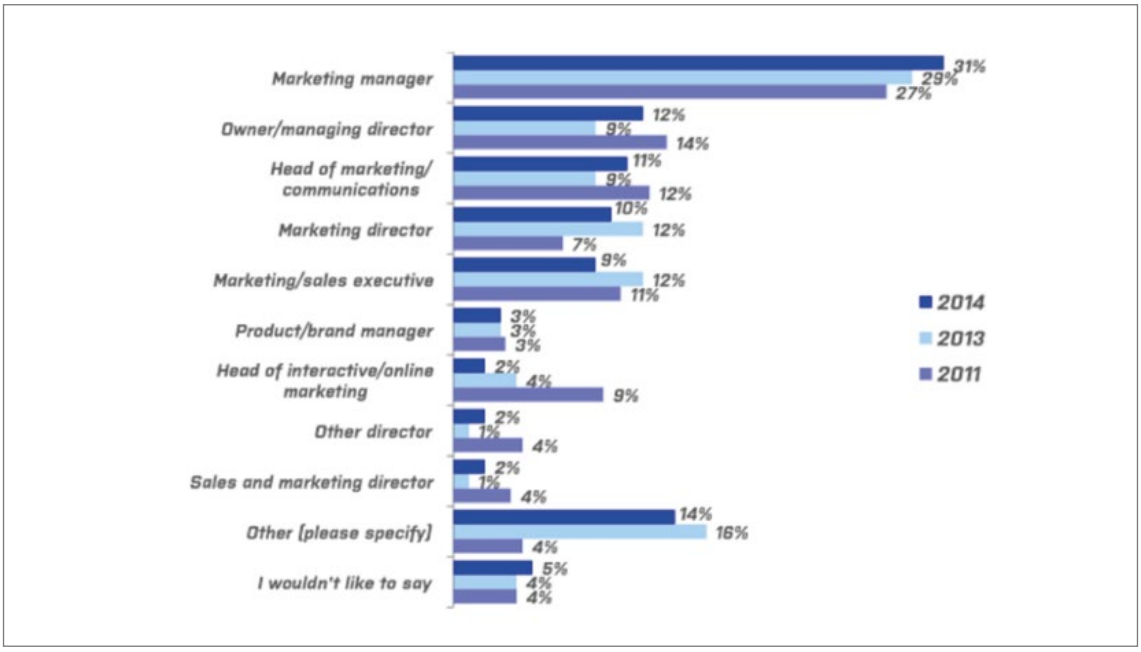
Question: Approximately how many people does your organisation employ in the UK?

Figure 3. Company type



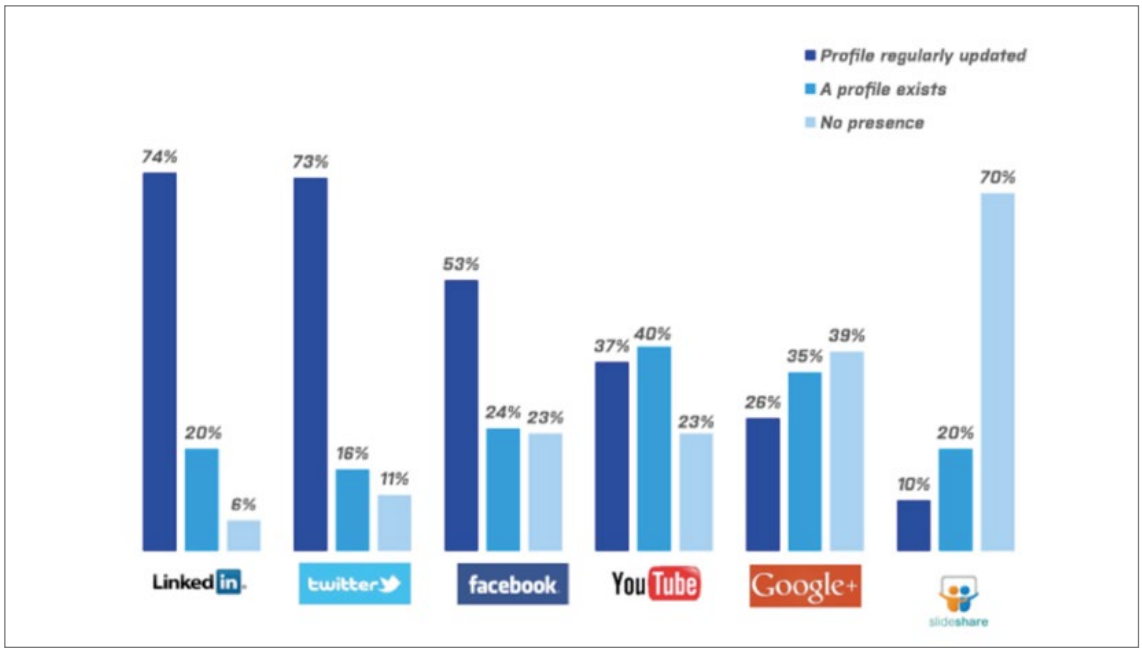
Question: Which of the following categories best describes the primary sector, or sectors, in which your organisation operates?

Figure 4. Job title



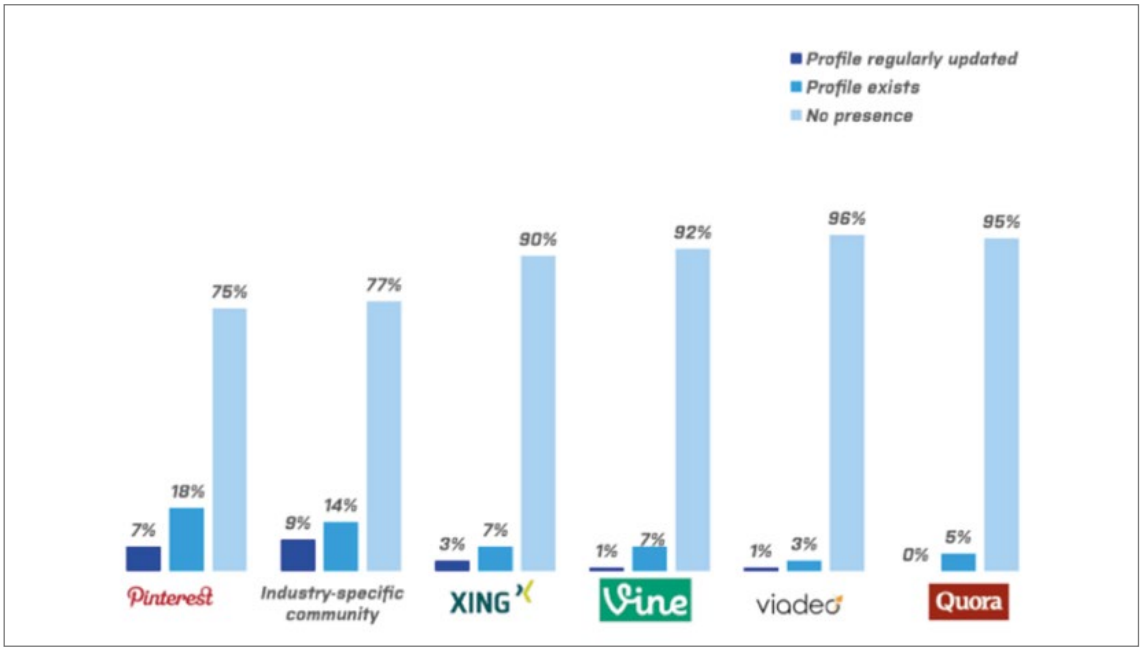
Question: What is your job title?

Figure 5. Most used social networks



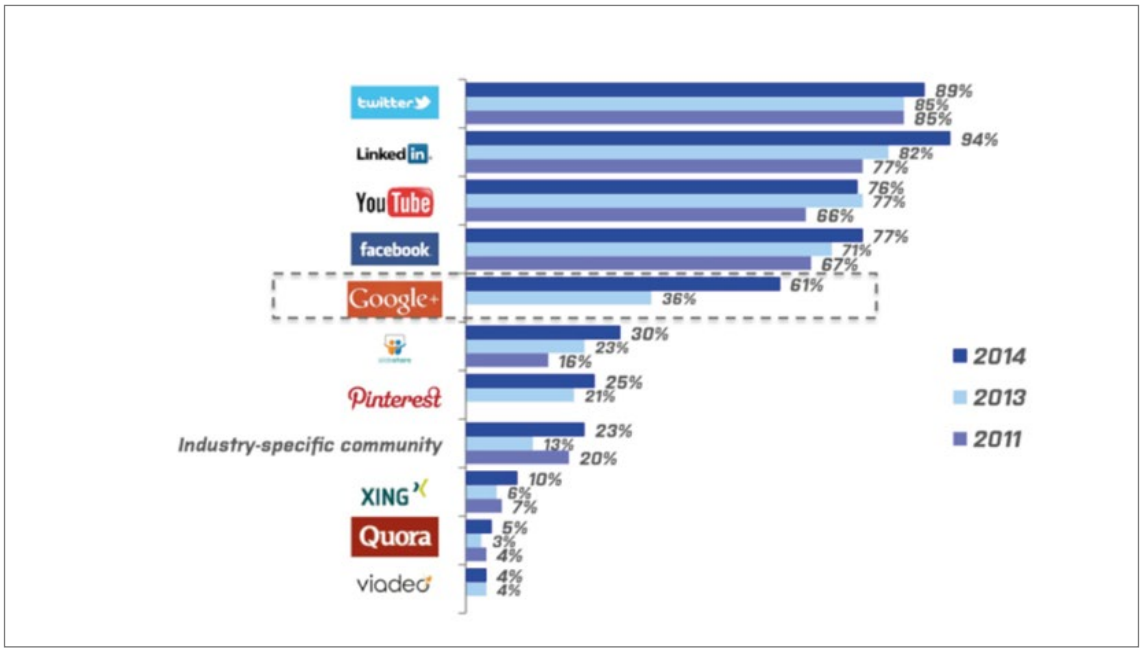
Question: What's the extent of your organisation's presence on the following social networks?

Figure 6. Least used social networks



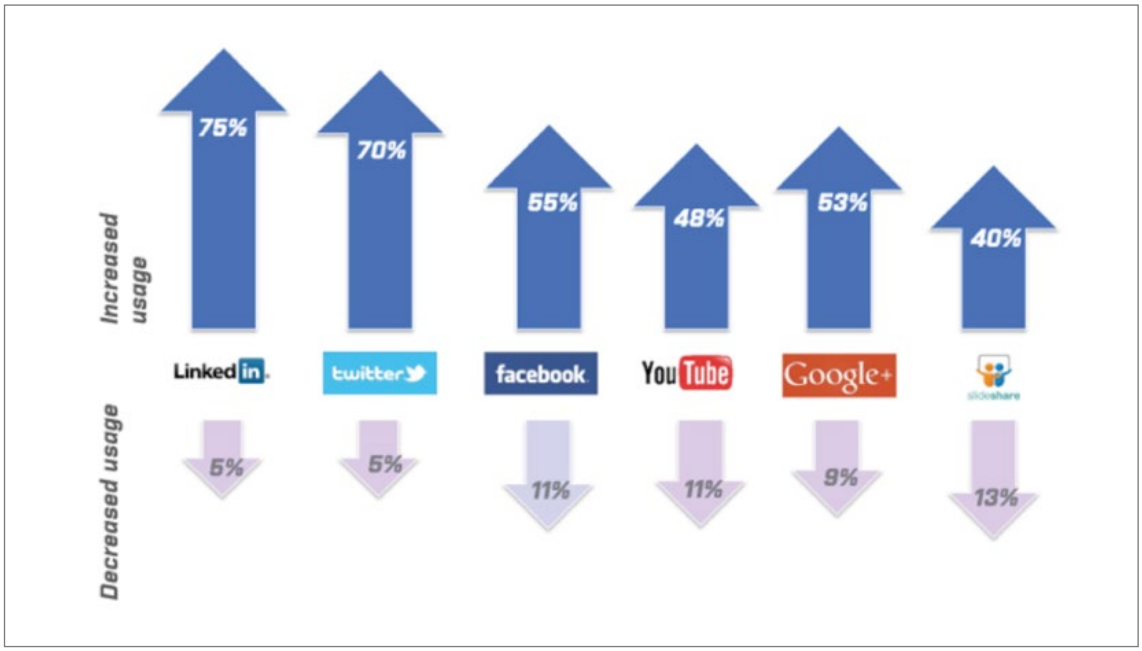
Question: What's the extent of your organisation's presence on the following social networks?

Figure 7. Change in company pages on social networks



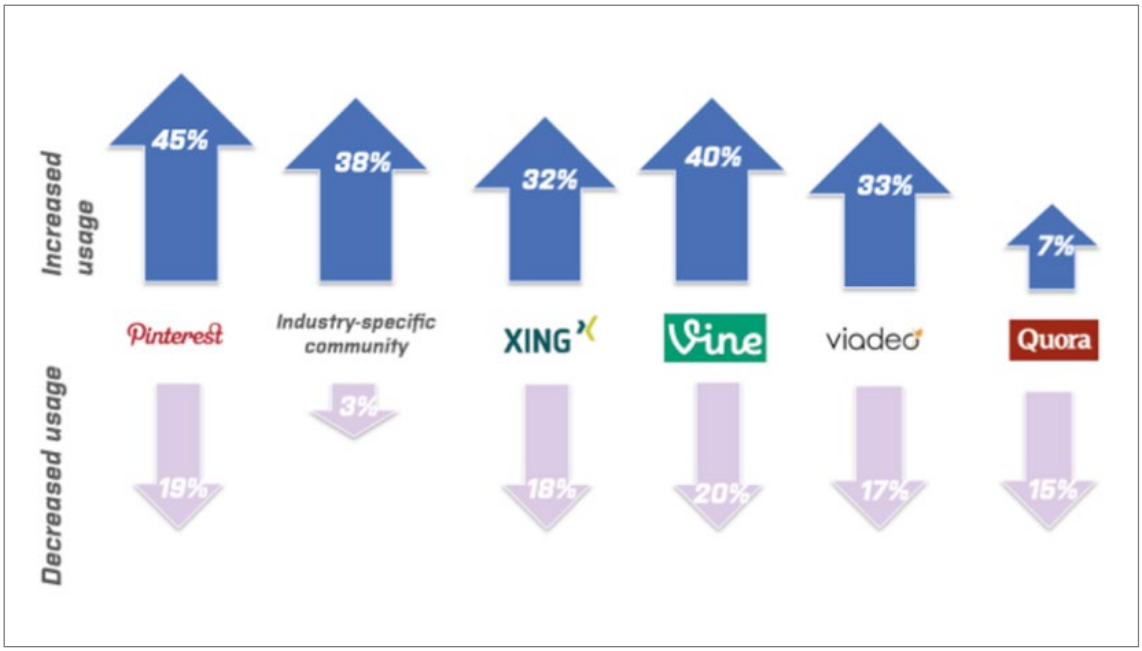
Question: What's the extent of your organisation's presence on the following social networks?

Figure 8. Social network usage in the last 12 months



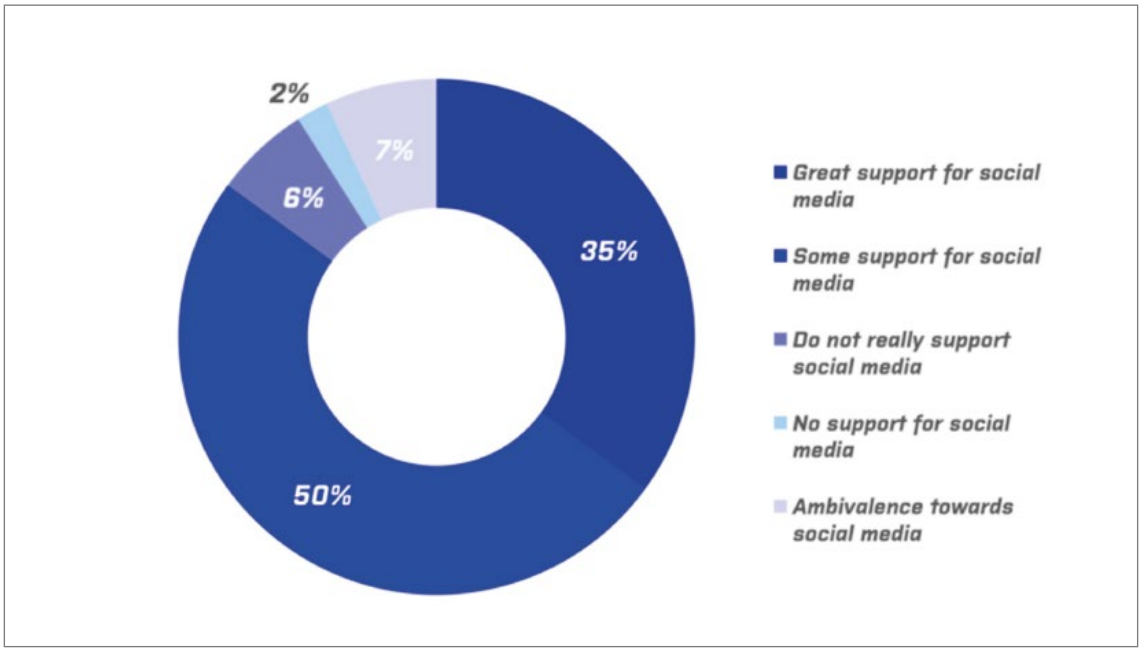
Question: Has your usage of each of these social networks increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months?

Figure 9. Social network usage in the last 12 months



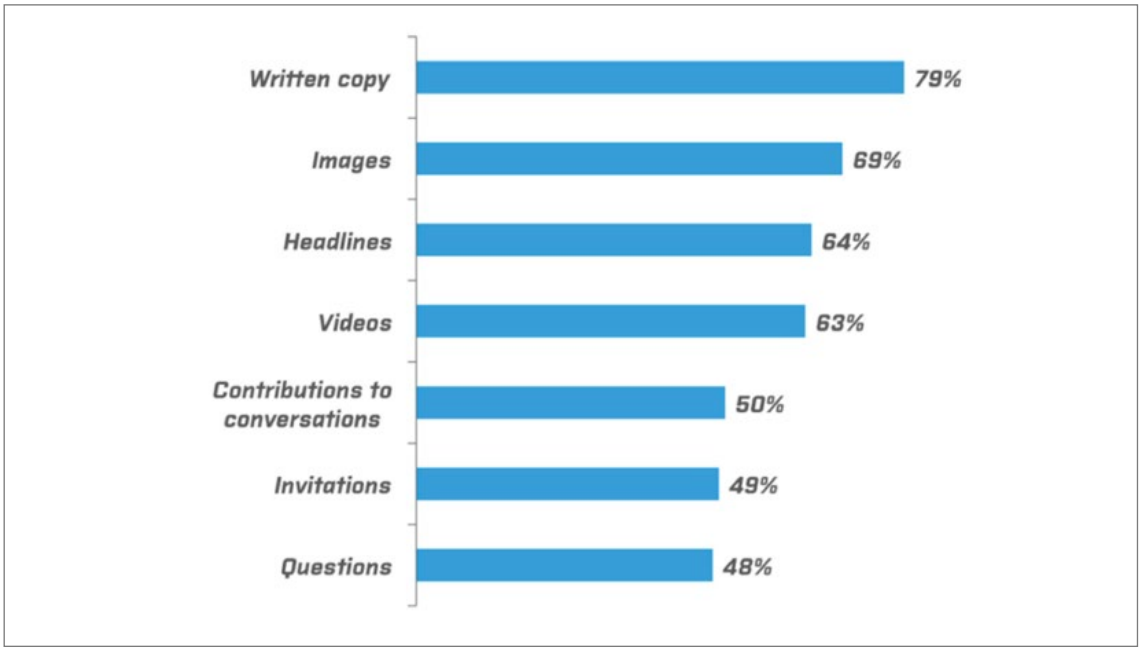
Question: Has your usage of each of these social networks increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months?

Figure 10. Resistance to social media in B2B organisations



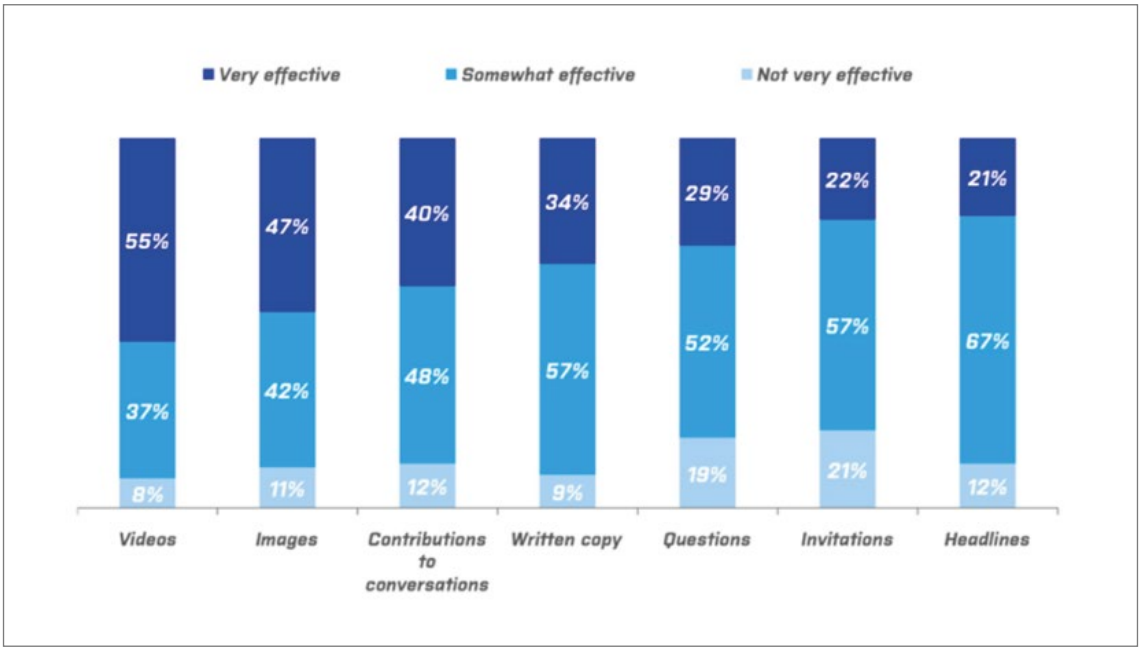
Question: To what extent does your social management team support the use of social media in marketing?

Figure 11. What brands are sharing on social media



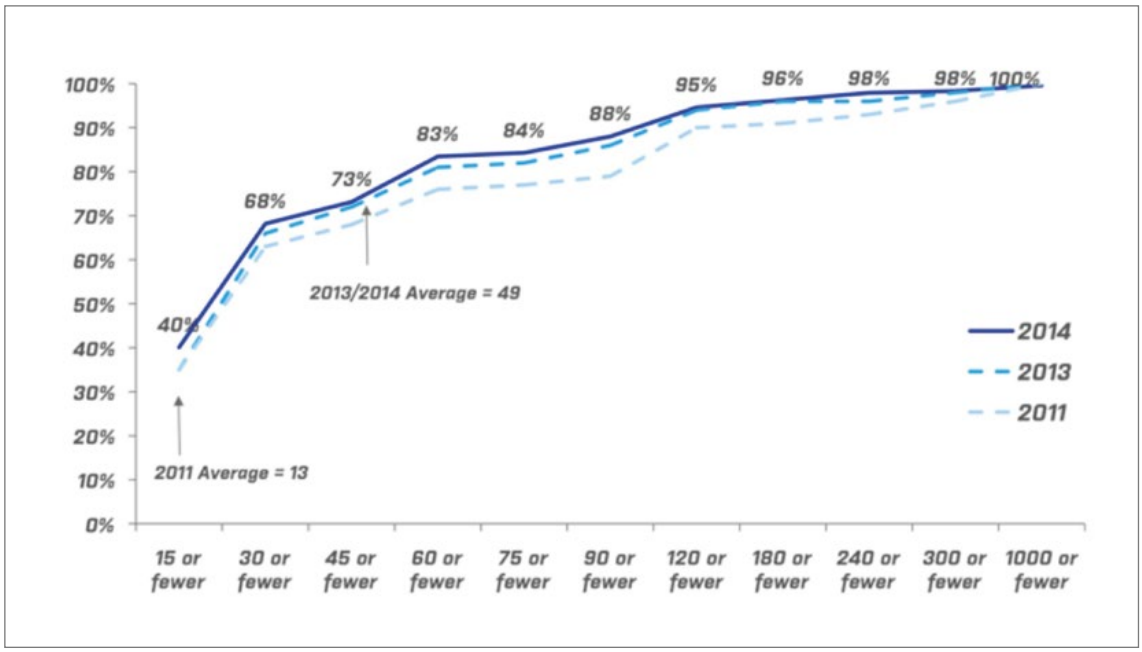
Question: Which of the following types of content does your organisation post on social media?

Figure 12. What content works best



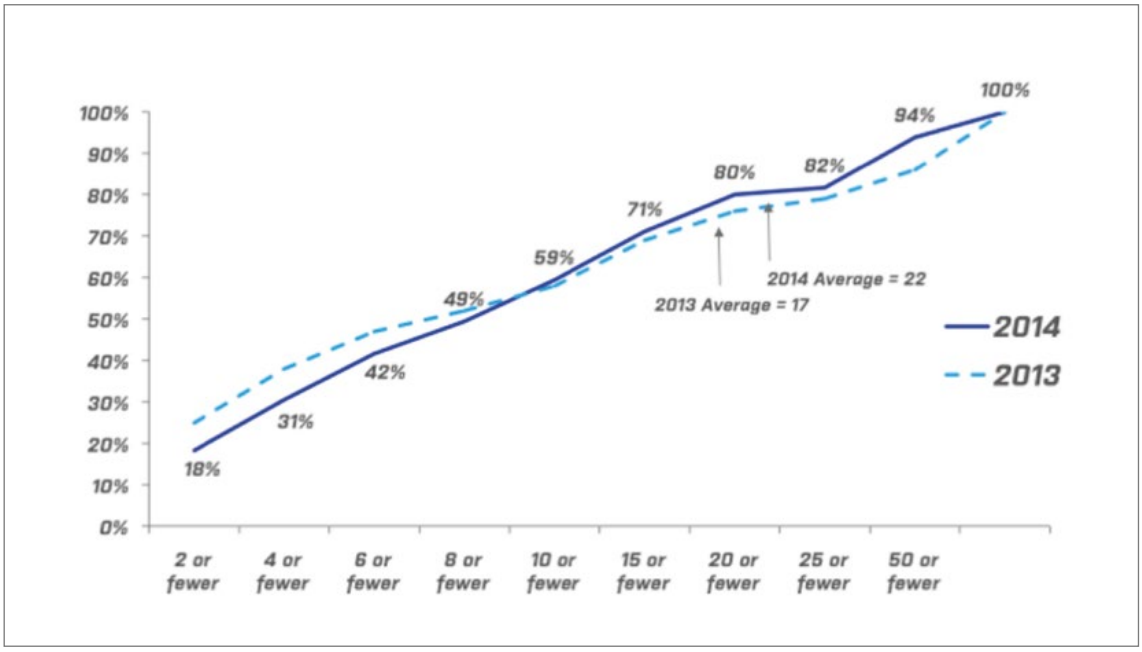
Question: How effective do you find each type of content?

Figure 13. Average Tweets per month



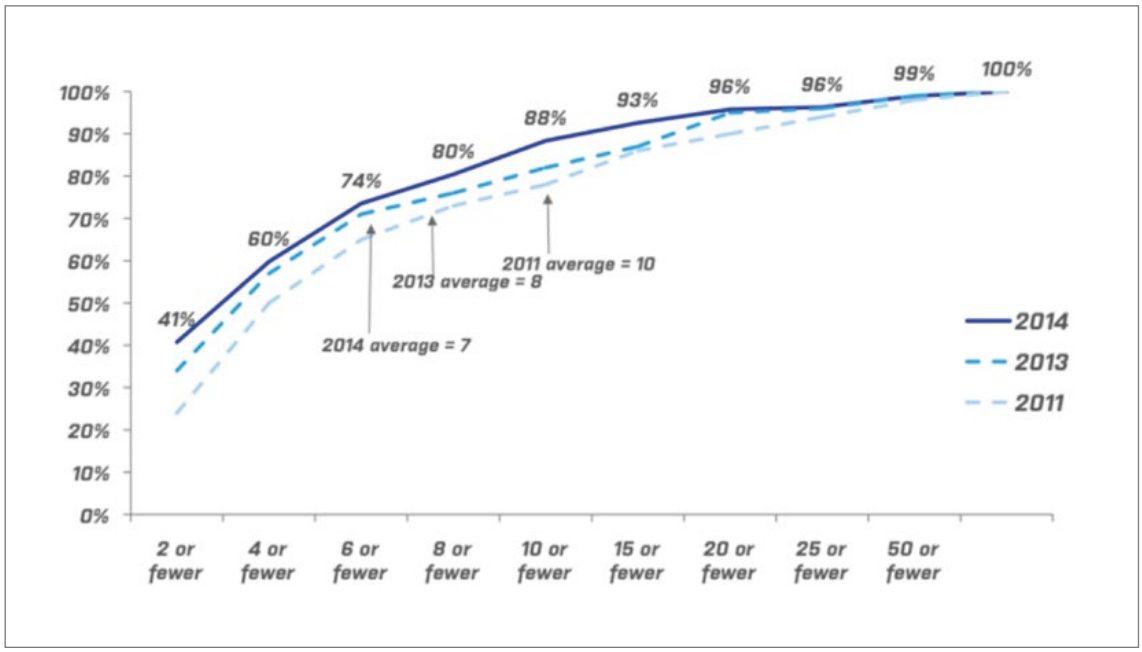
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation blog?

Figure 14. Average Facebook posts per month



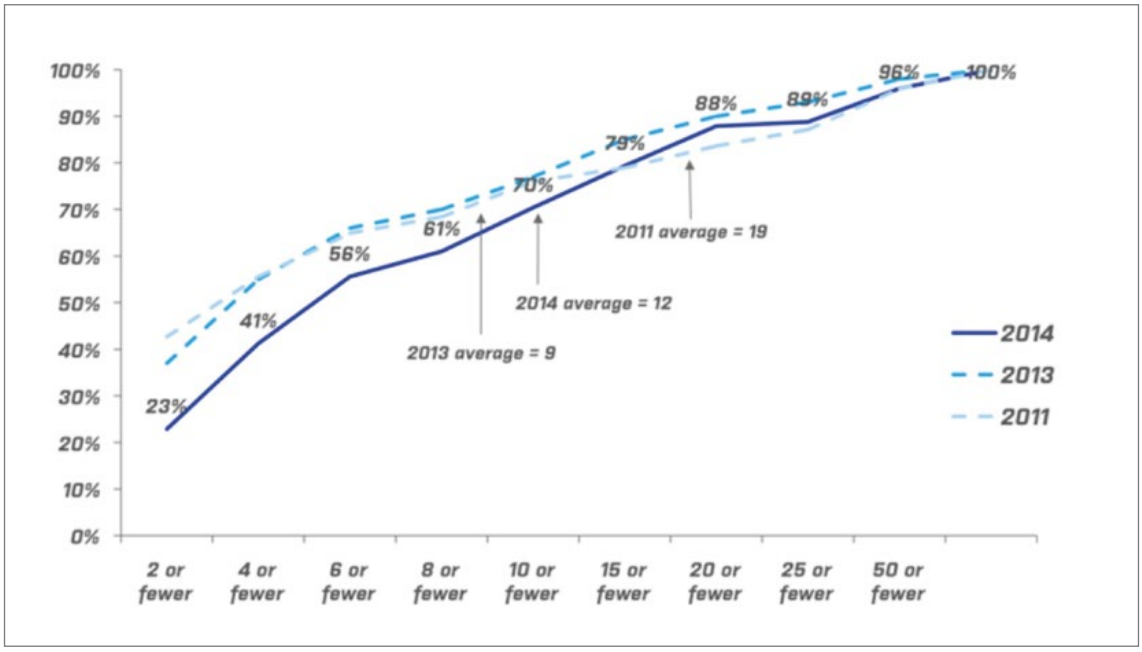
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation post on Facebook?

Figure 15. Average number of blogs per month



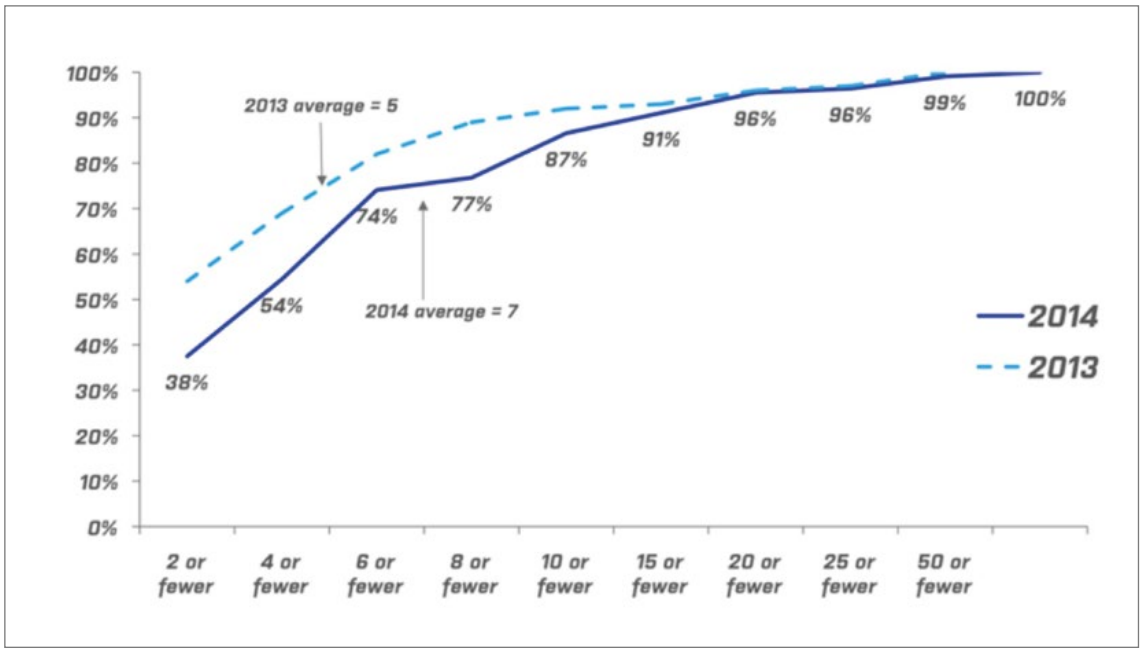
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation blog?

Figure 16. Average number of updates posted to LinkedIn group per month



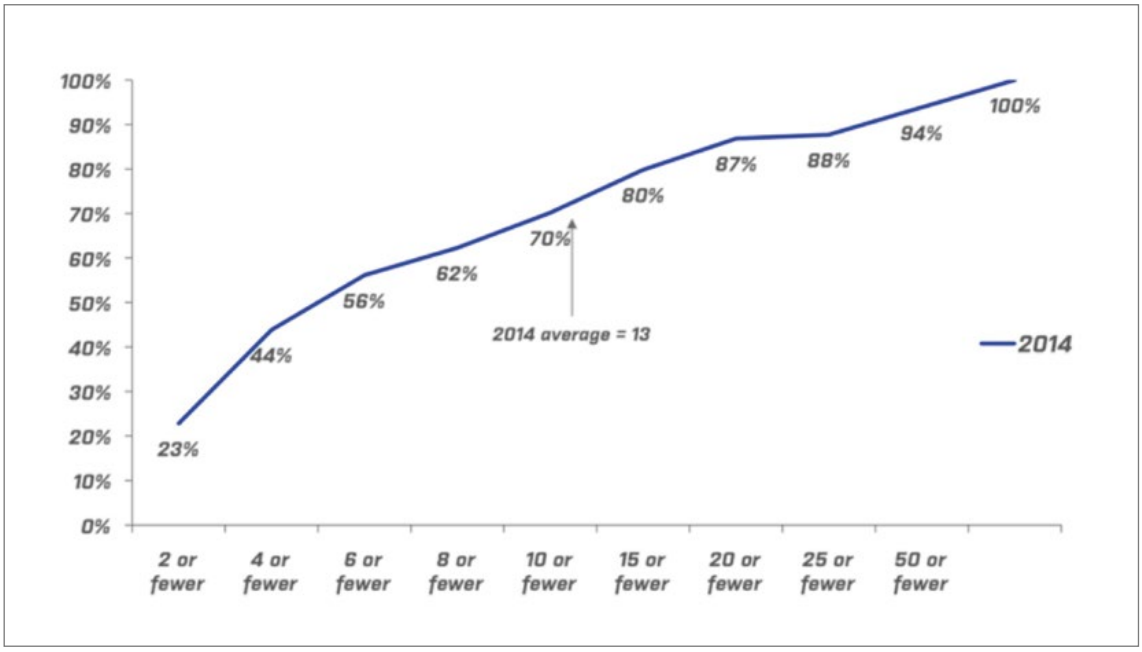
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation post updates to your LinkedIn group?

Figure 17. Average number of comments on a third-party blog per month



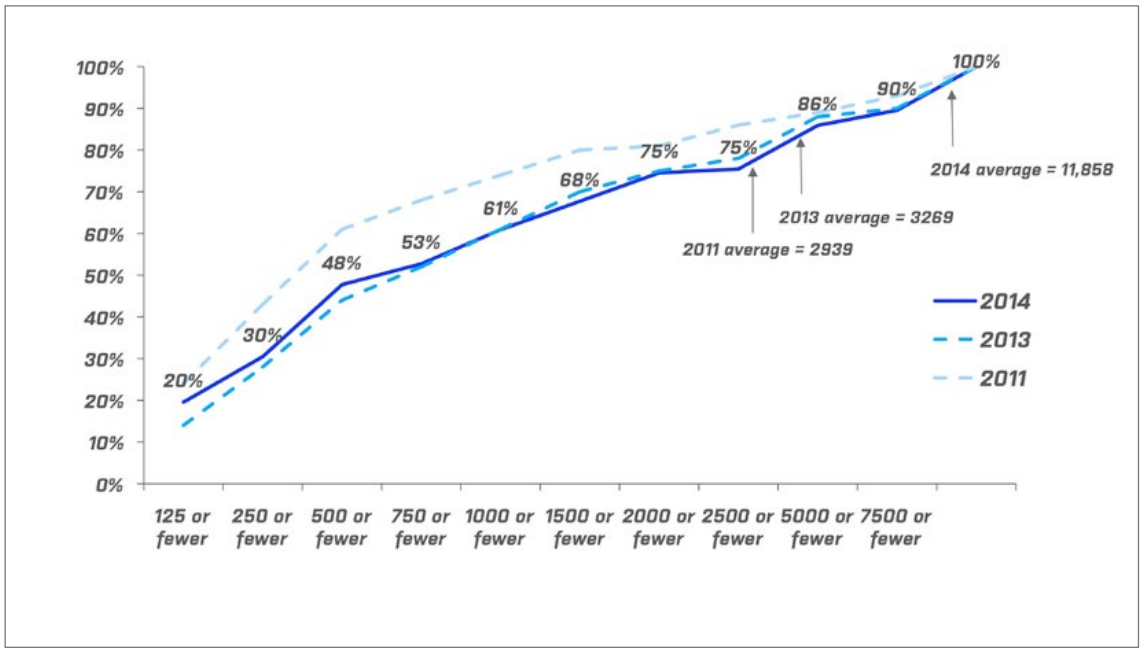
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation post comments on third-party blogs?

Figure 18. Average number of updates on Google+ per month



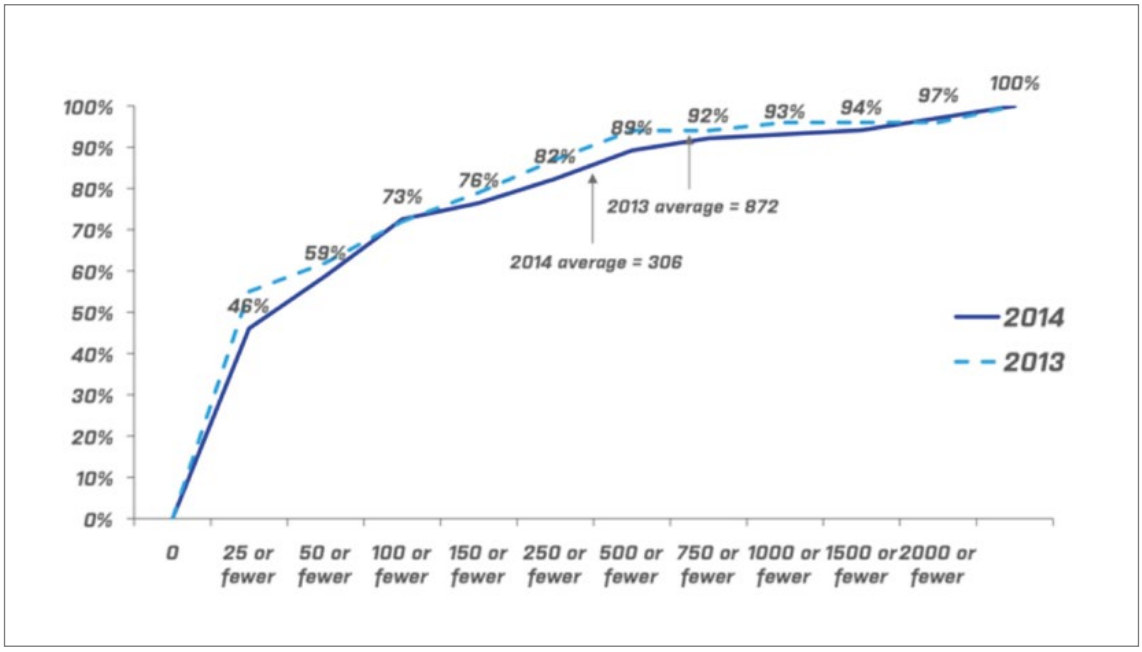
Question: On average, how many times a month does your organisation or designated individual(s) representing your organisation post updates on your Google+ page?

Figure 19. Average number of Twitter followers



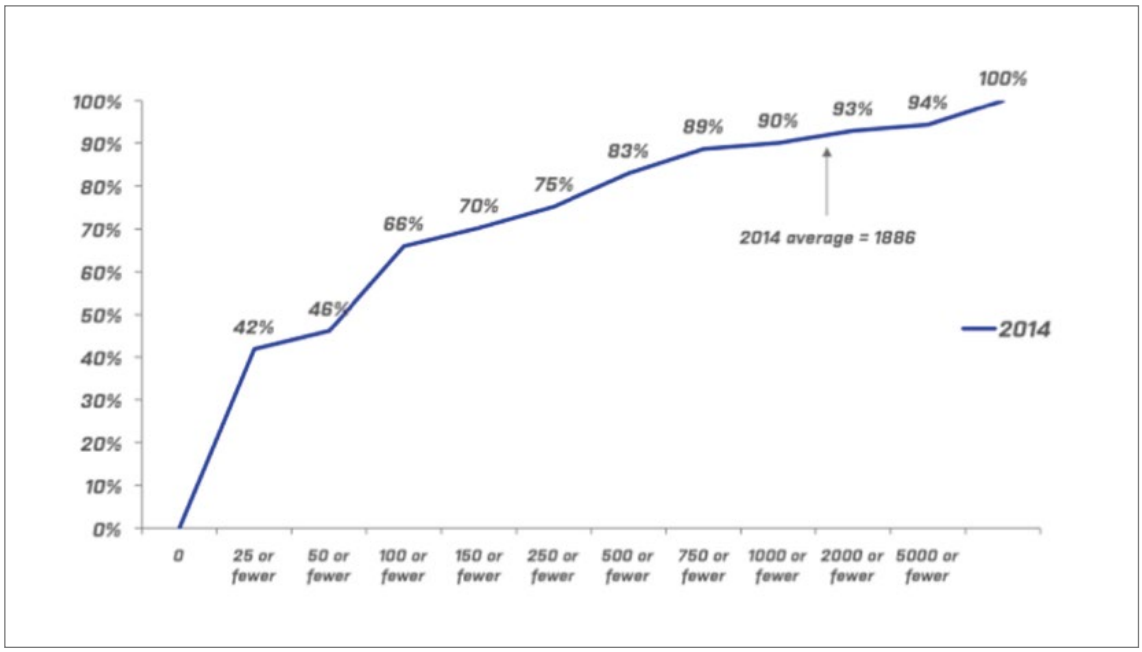
Question: Please indicate how many people follow you on Twitter

Figure 20. Average number of added companies to their circles on Google+



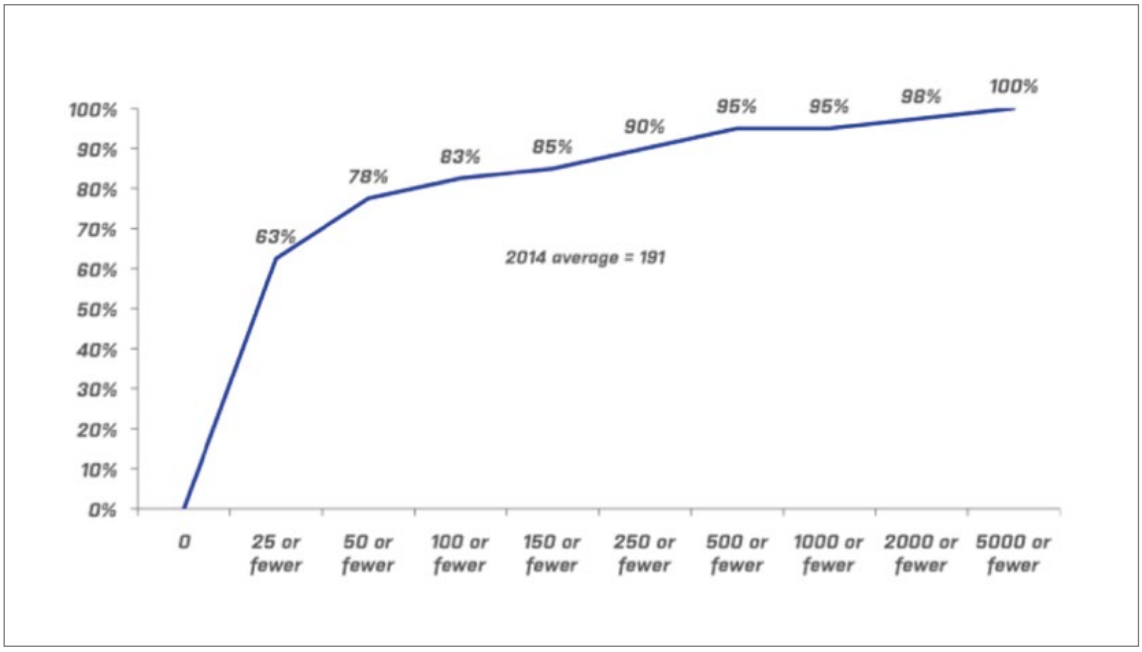
Question: Please indicate how many people have added your company to their circles on Google+

Figure 21. Average YouTube channel subscribers



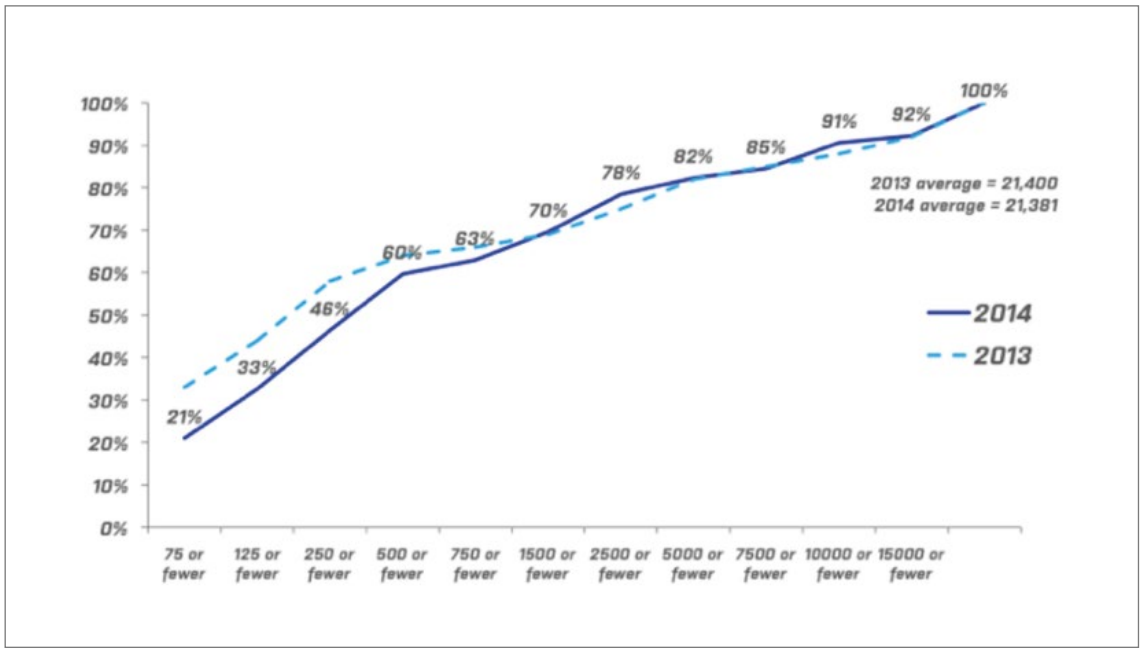
Question: Please indicate how many people have subscribed to your YouTube channel

Figure 22. Average SlideShare account followers



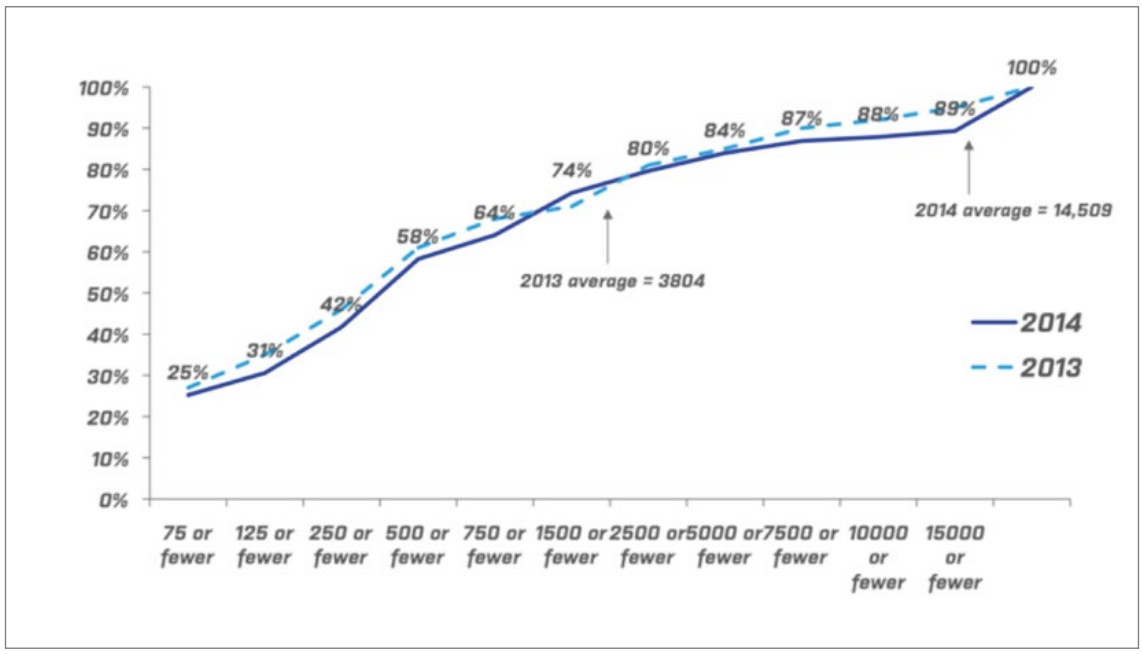
Question: Please indicate how many people have followed your SlideShare account

Figure 23. Average number of Facebook 'Likes'



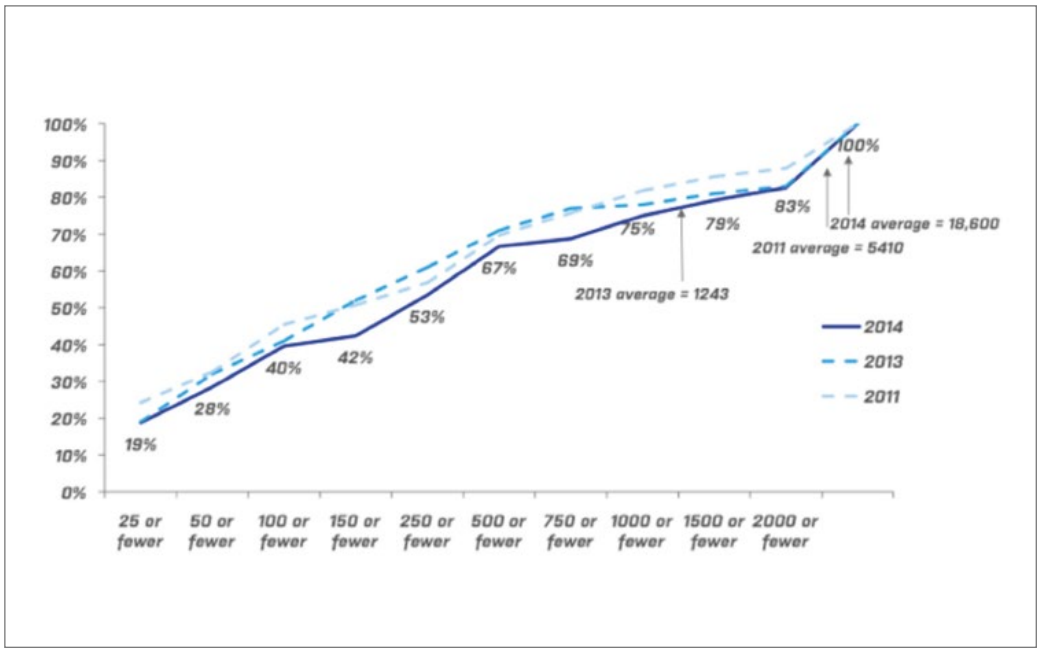
Question: Please indicate how many Facebook 'Likes' your company page has

Figure 24. Average number of LinkedIn company page followers



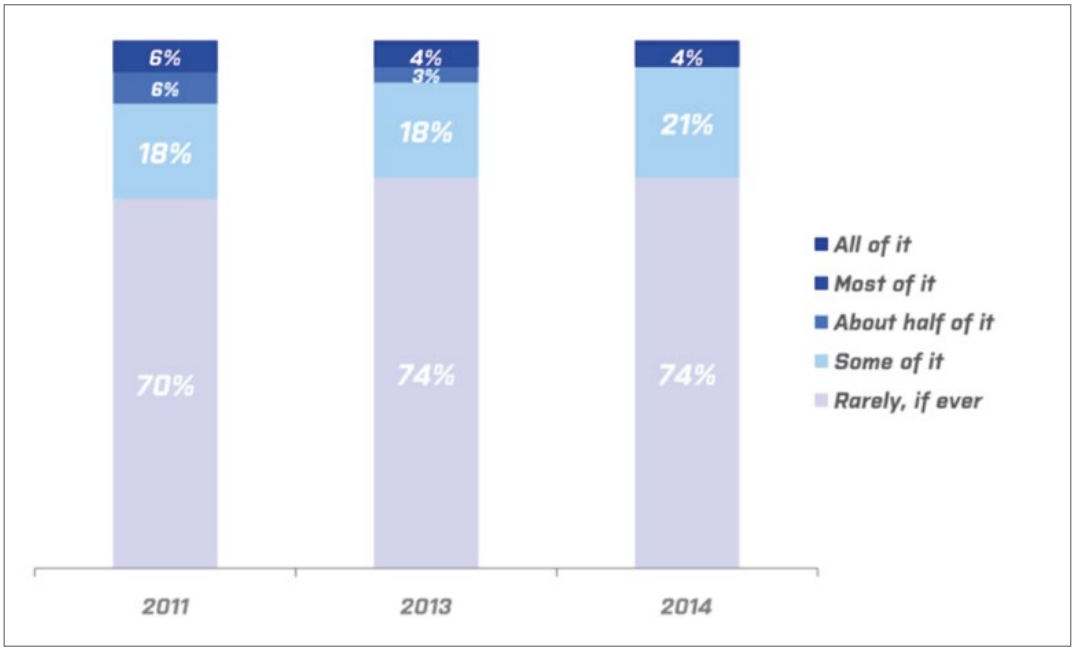
Question: Please indicate how many followers your company page on LinkedIn has

Figure 25. Average number of LinkedIn page members



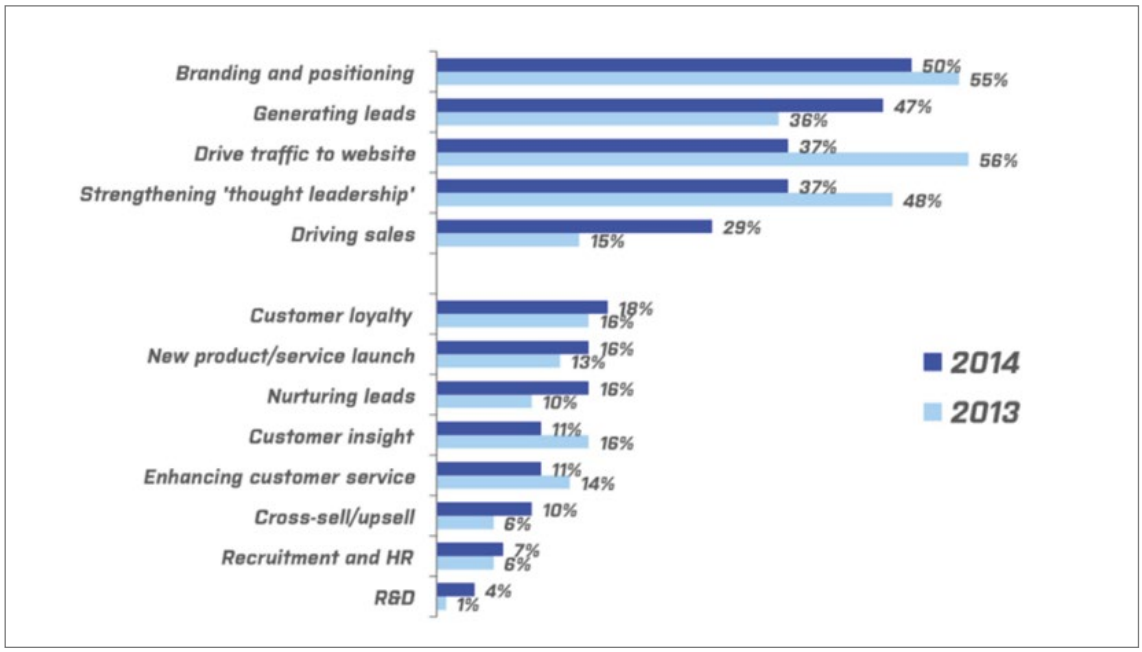
Question: Please indicate how many LinkedIn page members you have

Figure 26. Outsourcing social media activities



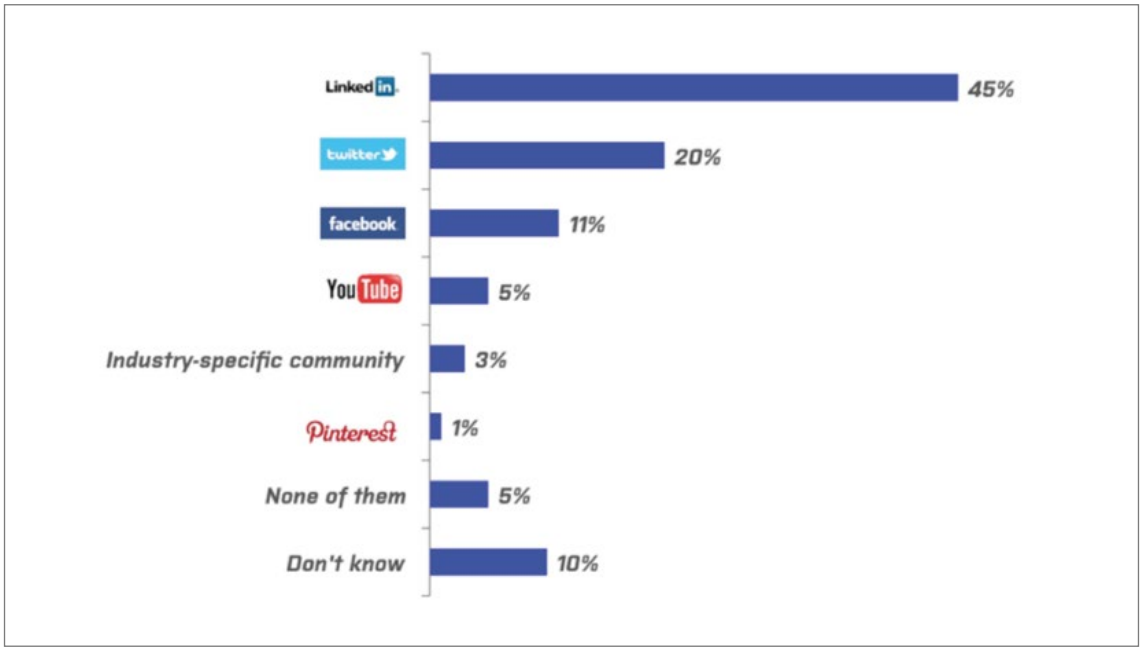
Question: To what extent do you outsource your social media marketing activity to third parties?

Figure 27. Important social media objectives



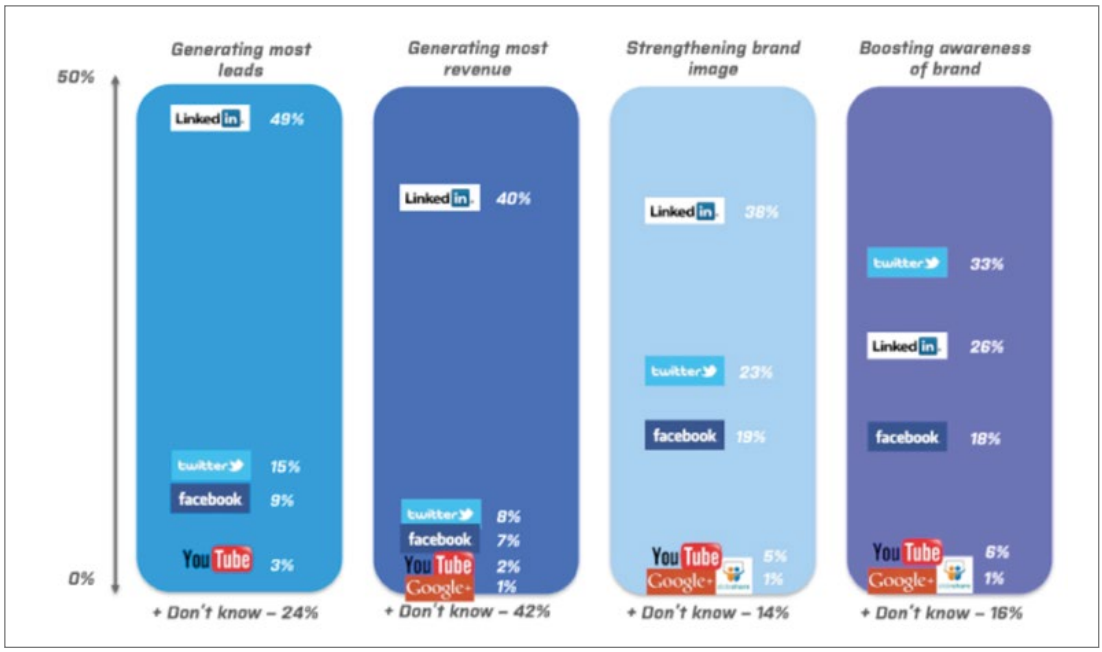
Question: Which three would you say are the most important objectives for your organisation?

Figure 28. Most effective social channels for achieving marketing goals



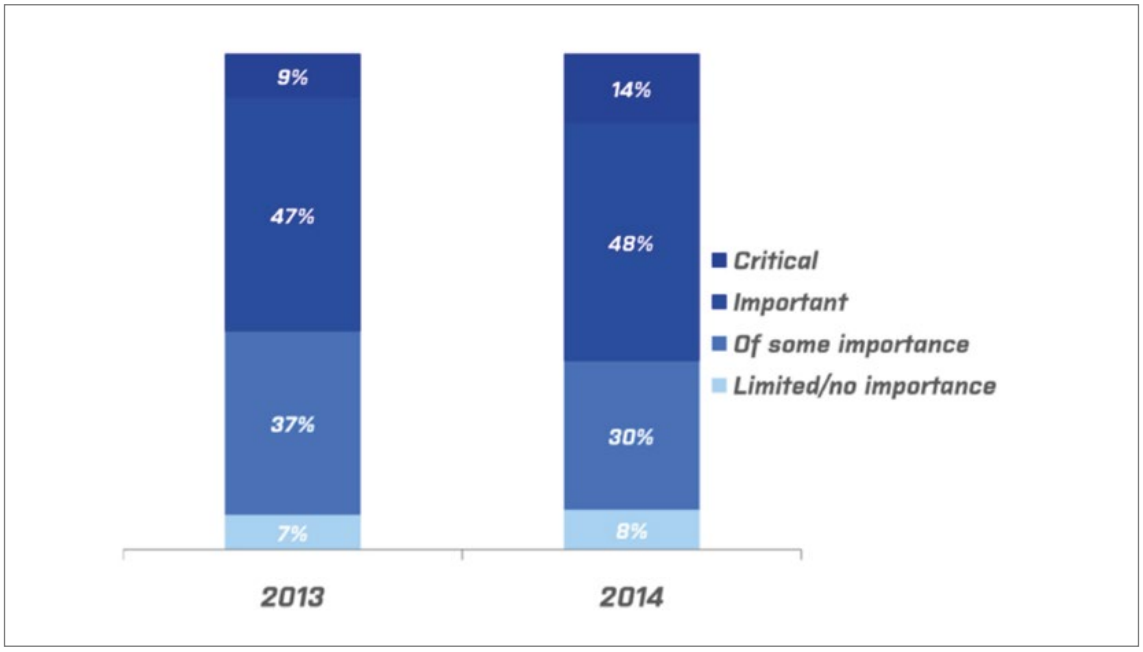
Question: Which one of these social networks do you find most effective in achieving your marketing goals?

Figure 29. Most effective social channels



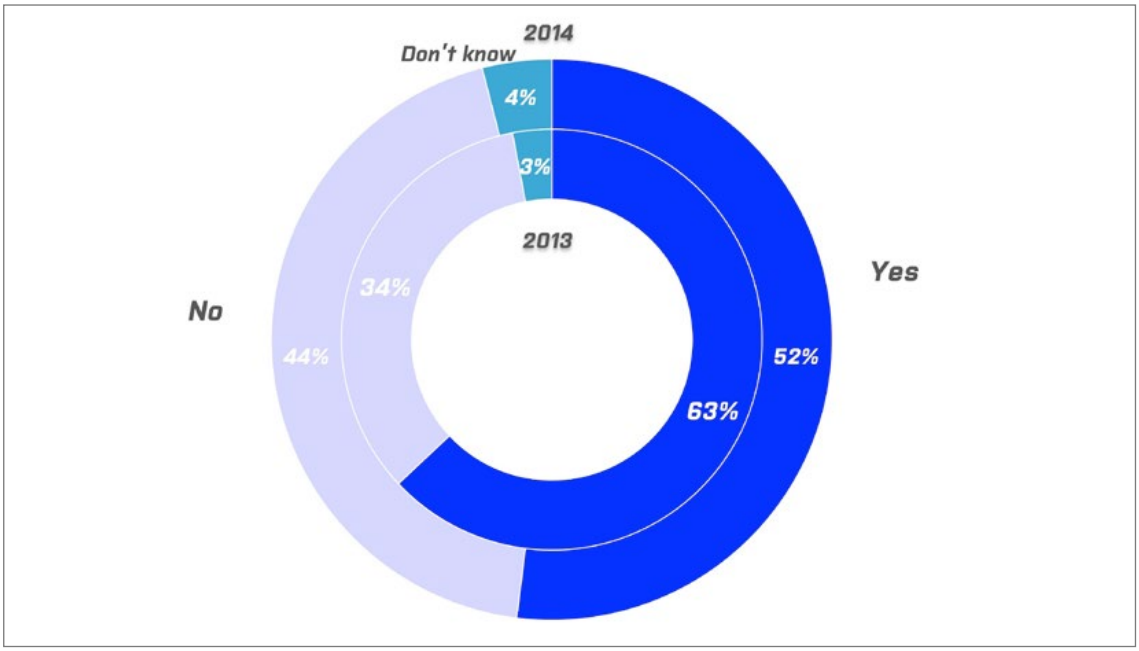
Question: Which social media platform do you think is most effective at generating most leads, generating most revenue, strengthening brand image and boosting brand awareness?

Figure 30. Importance of social media



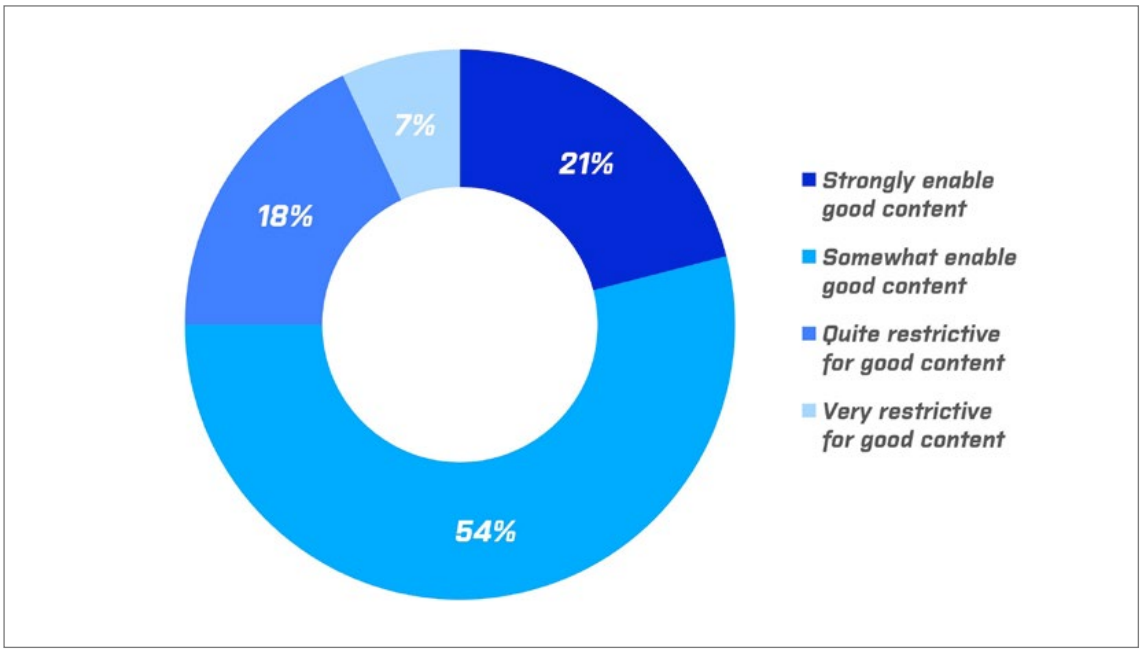
Question: How important a part of your marketing activity is social media?

Figure 31. Social media guidelines



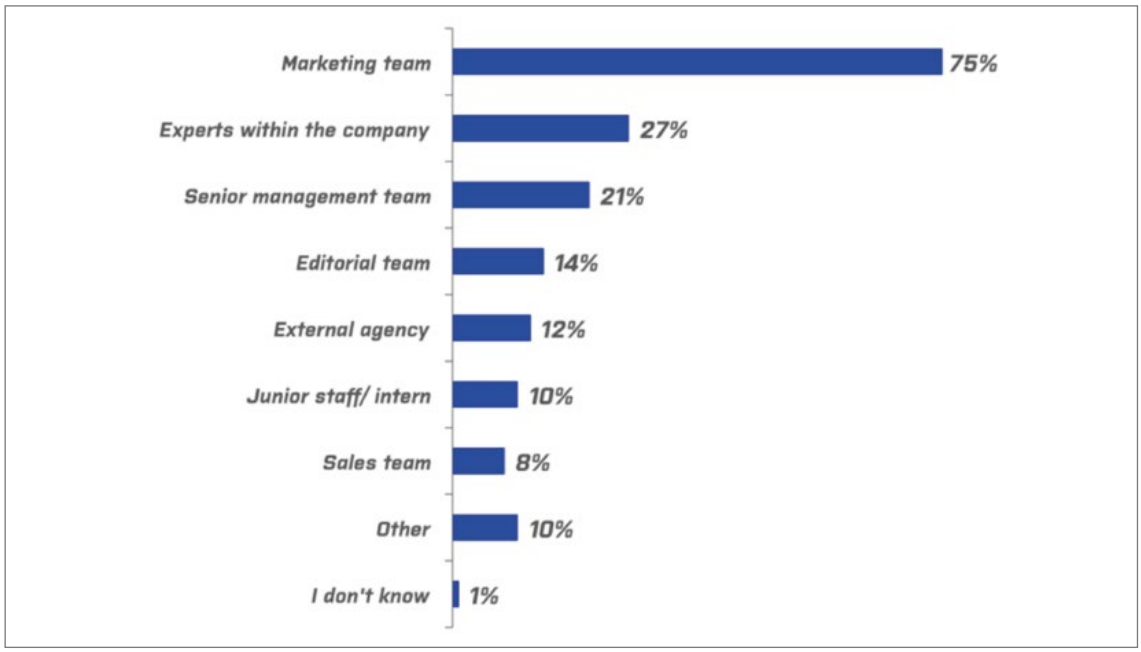
Question: Do you have any guidelines that employees should use when representing your company on social media?

Figure 32. Restrictiveness of social guidelines



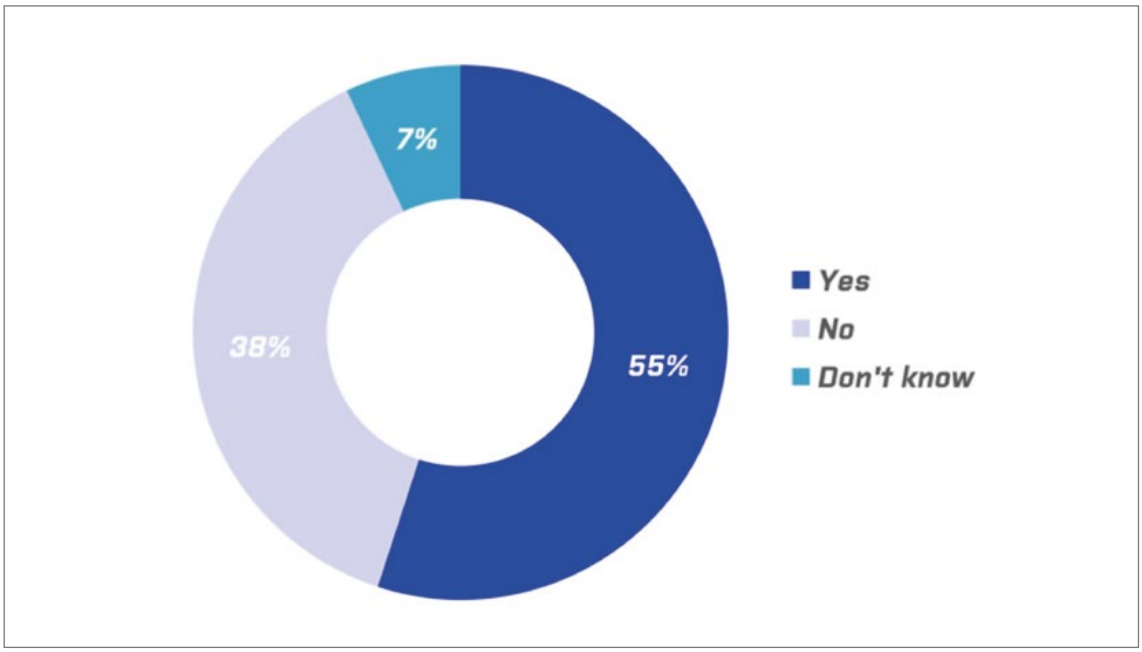
Question: To what extent do you find social media guidelines can enable good social media content?

Figure 33. Who posts on social channels



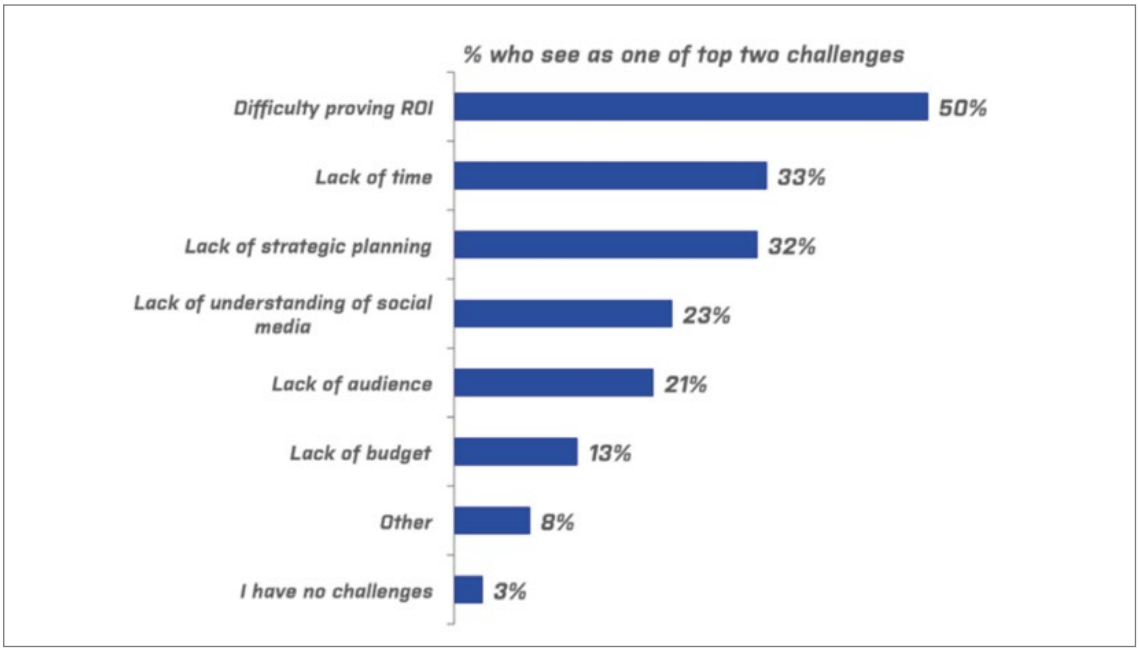
Question: Who posts on social channels on behalf of your organisation?

Figure 34. Strategic social media activity



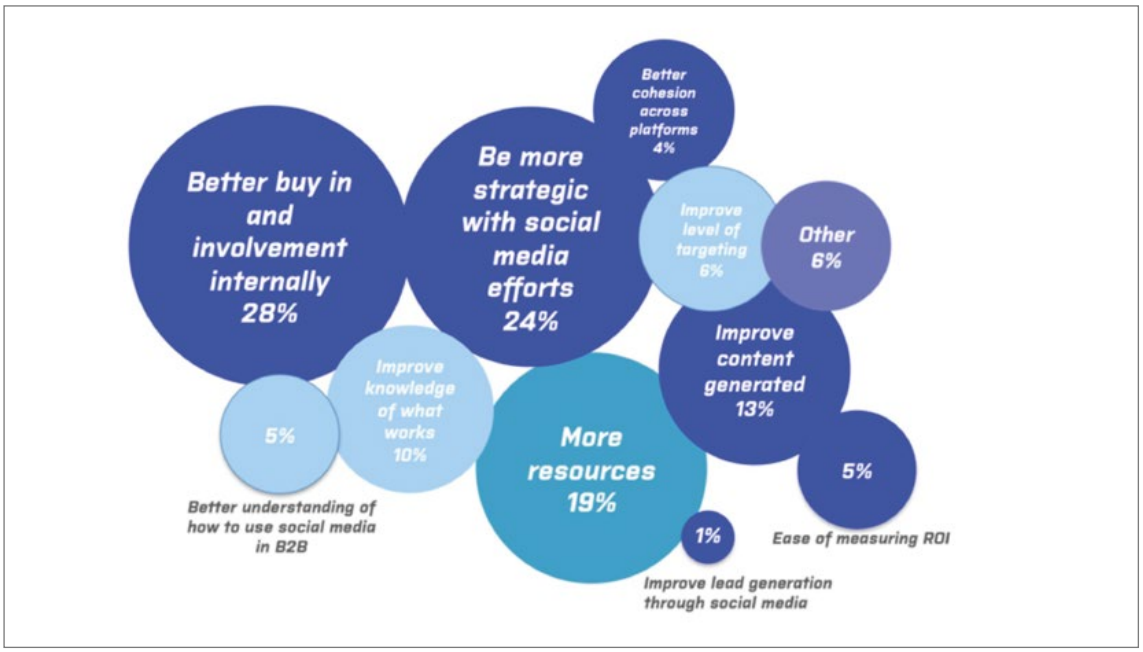
Question: Would you agree your social media activity is carried out strategically?

Figure 35. Key challenges



Question: Please select the top two challenges you face in relation to social media

Figure 36. Changes to improve social media activity impact



Question: Is there anything you feel could be done differently to improve the impact of your social media activity?

Figure 37. Confidence in social media

Question: On a scale of 1-10 (10 being very confident), how confident are you that...

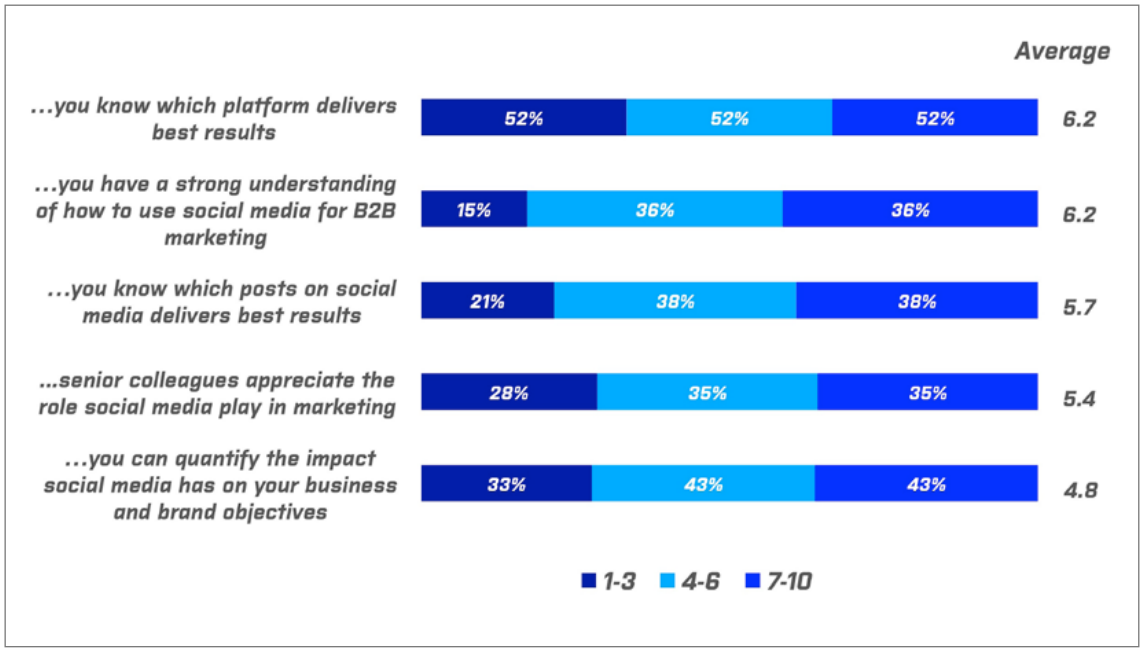
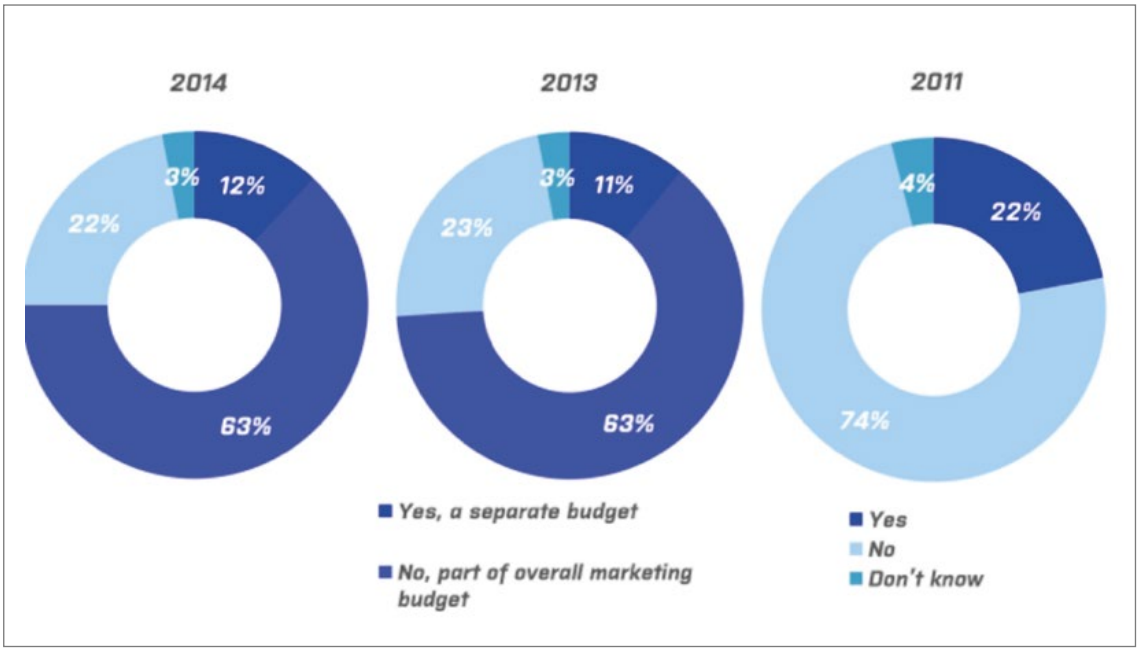
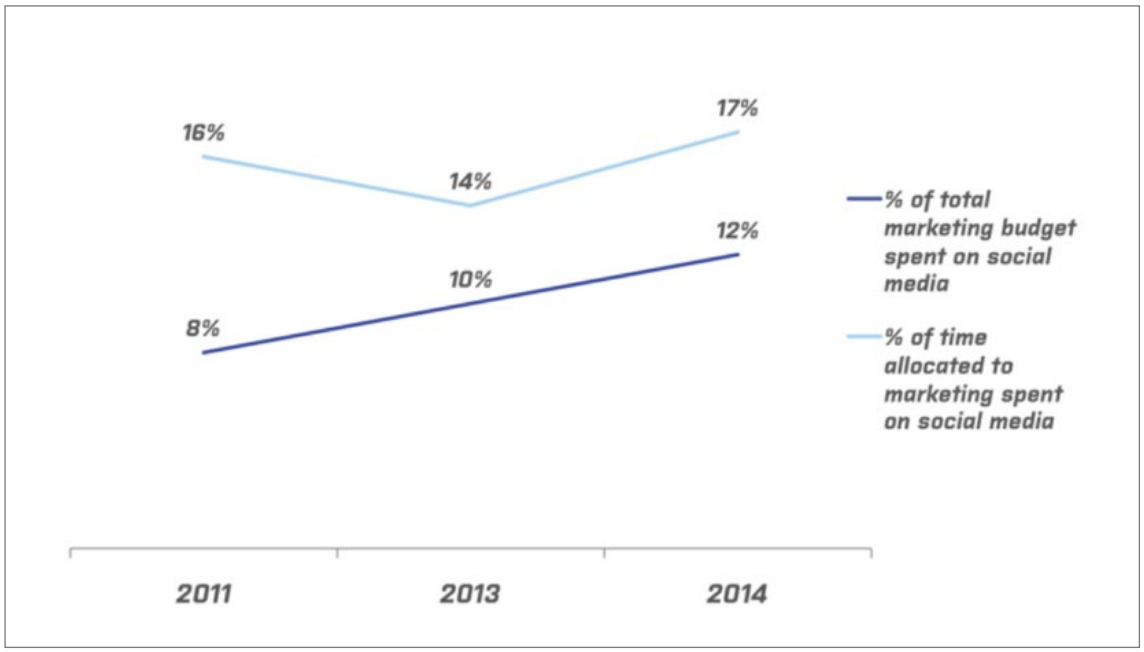


Figure 38. Social media budget



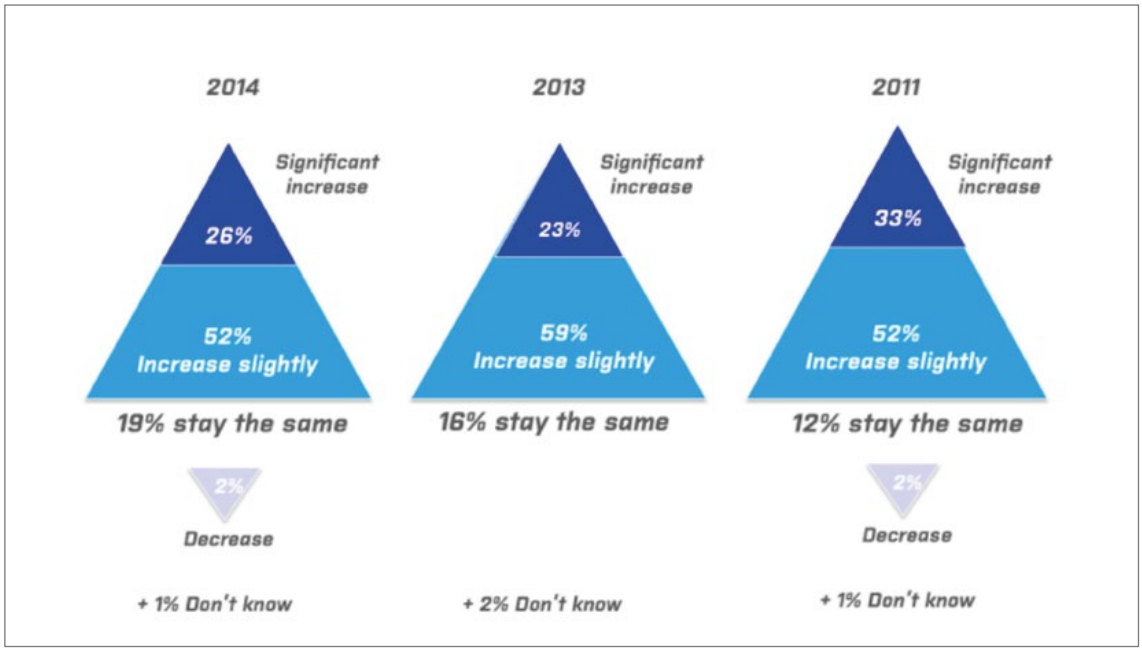
Question: Do you have a specific budget for social media?

Figure 39. Time and spend on social media



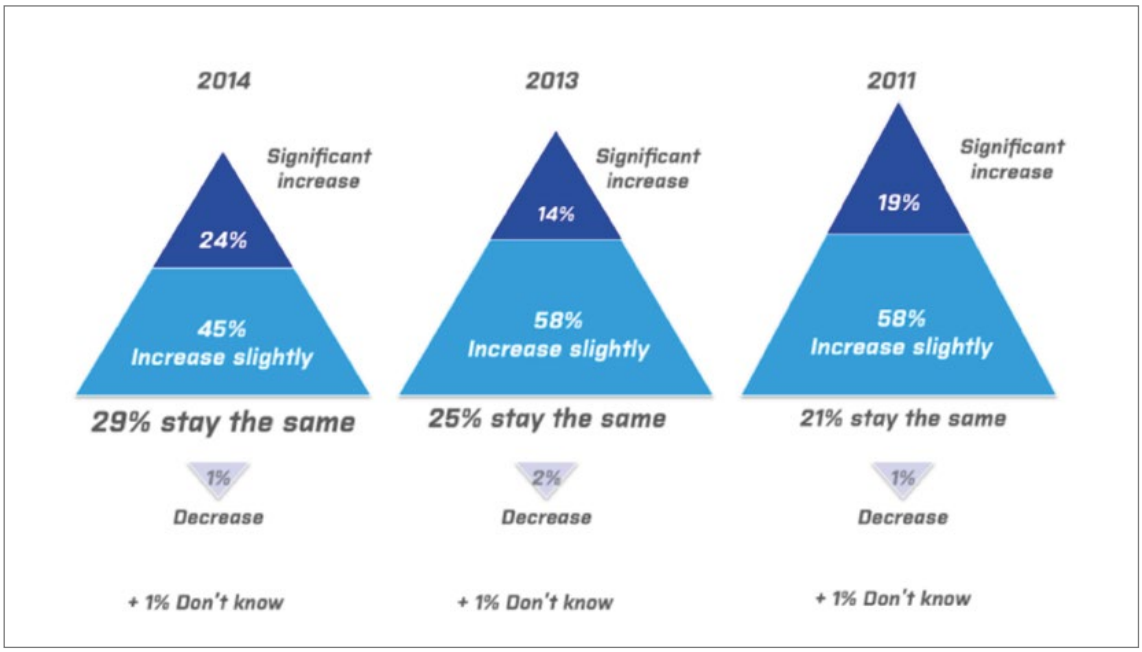
Question: What percentage of your overall marketing budget is spent on social media?

Figure 40. Predicted change in time spent on social media



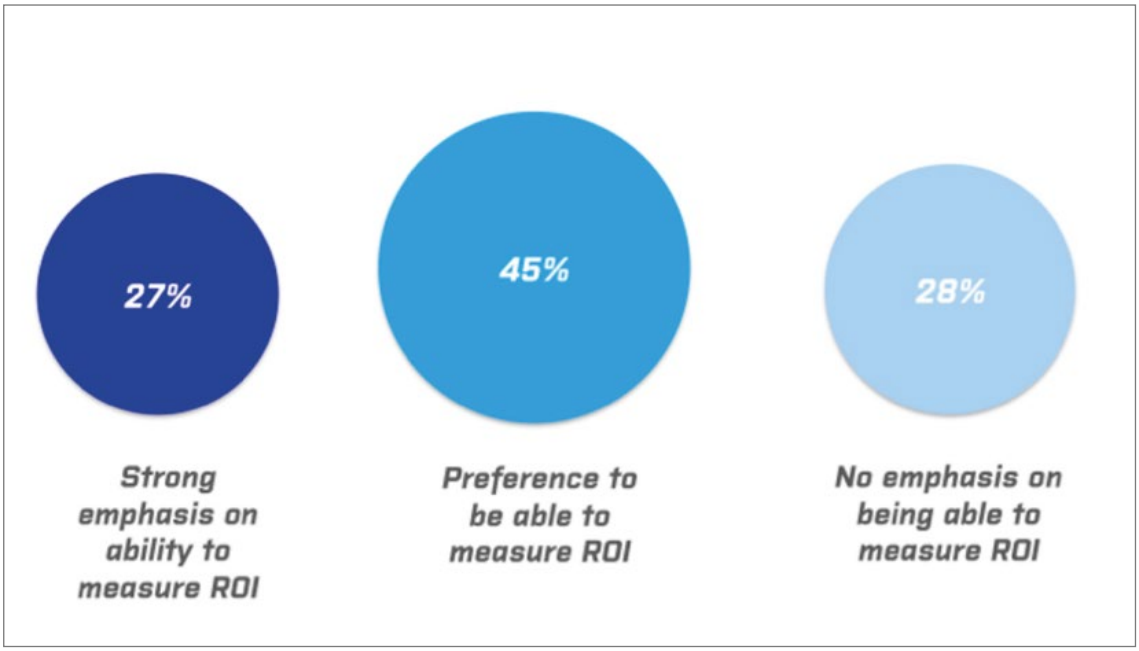
Question: Do you expect the amount of time your organisation spends on social media to increase or decrease in the next 12 months?

Figure 41. Predicted change in spend on social media



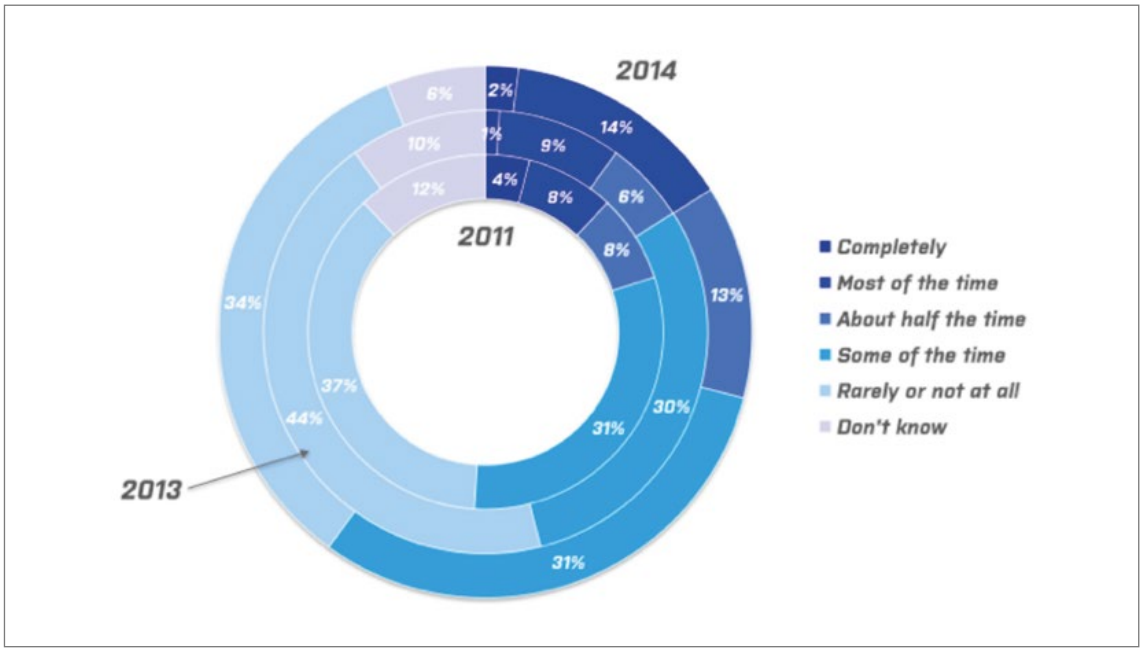
Question: Do you expect your spend on social media to increase or decrease in the next 12 months?

Figure 42. Emphasis on demonstrating social media ROI



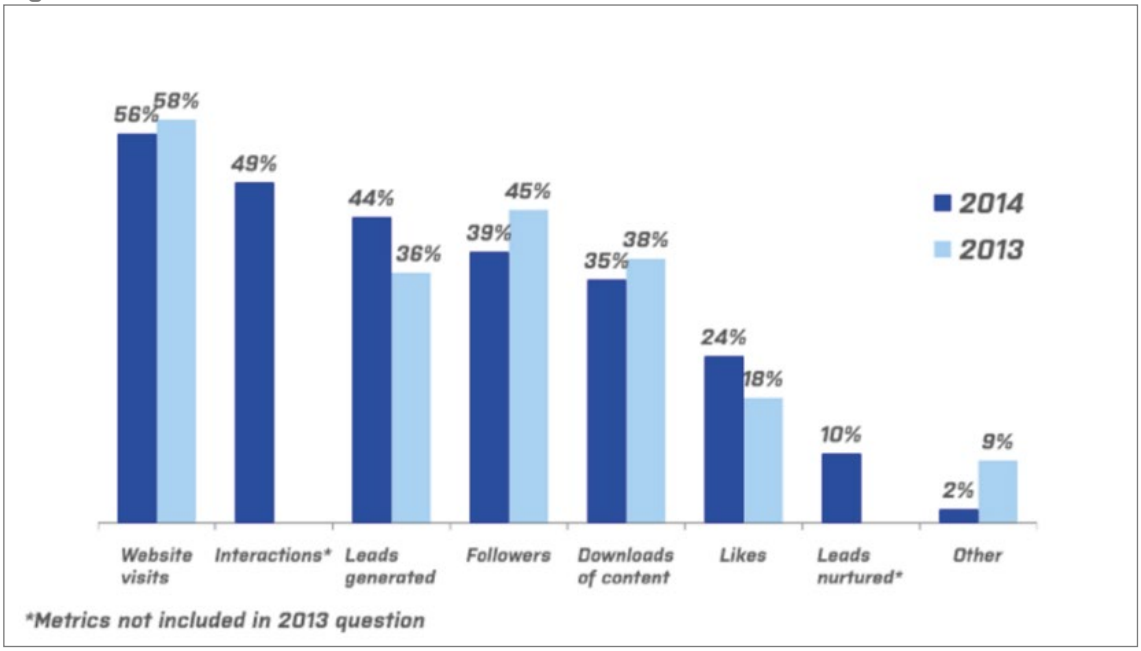
Question: To what extent does your senior management team want social media activity to demonstrate ROI?

Figure 43. Demonstrable ROI on social media



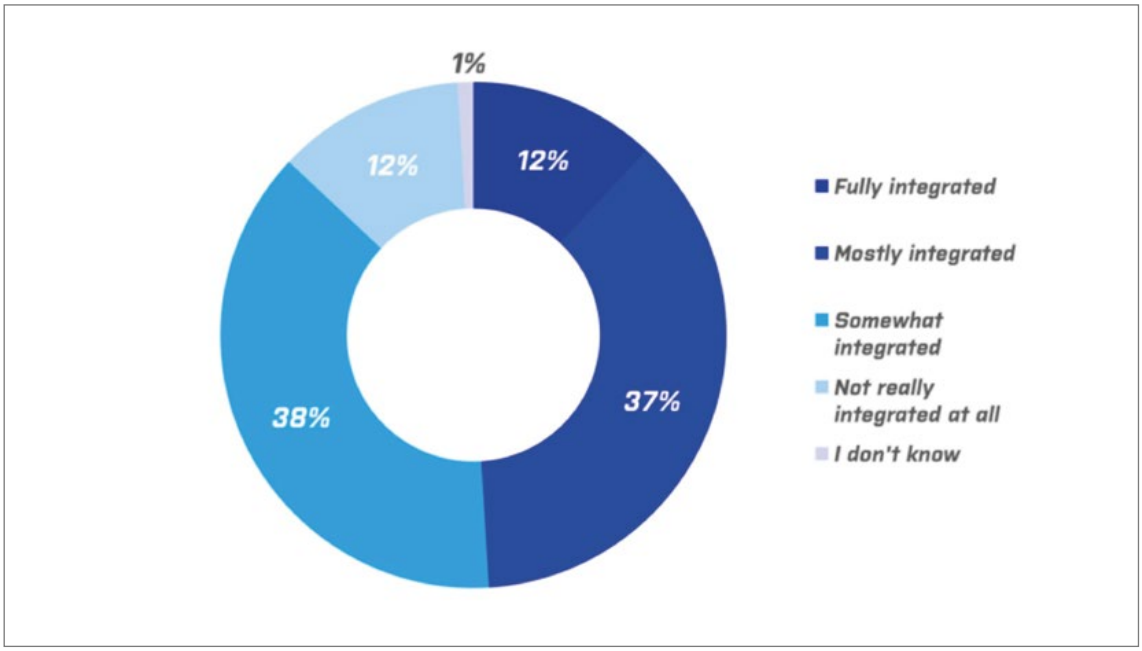
Question: To what extent would you say you can demonstrate ROI from your social media activity?

Figure 44. Social media metrics



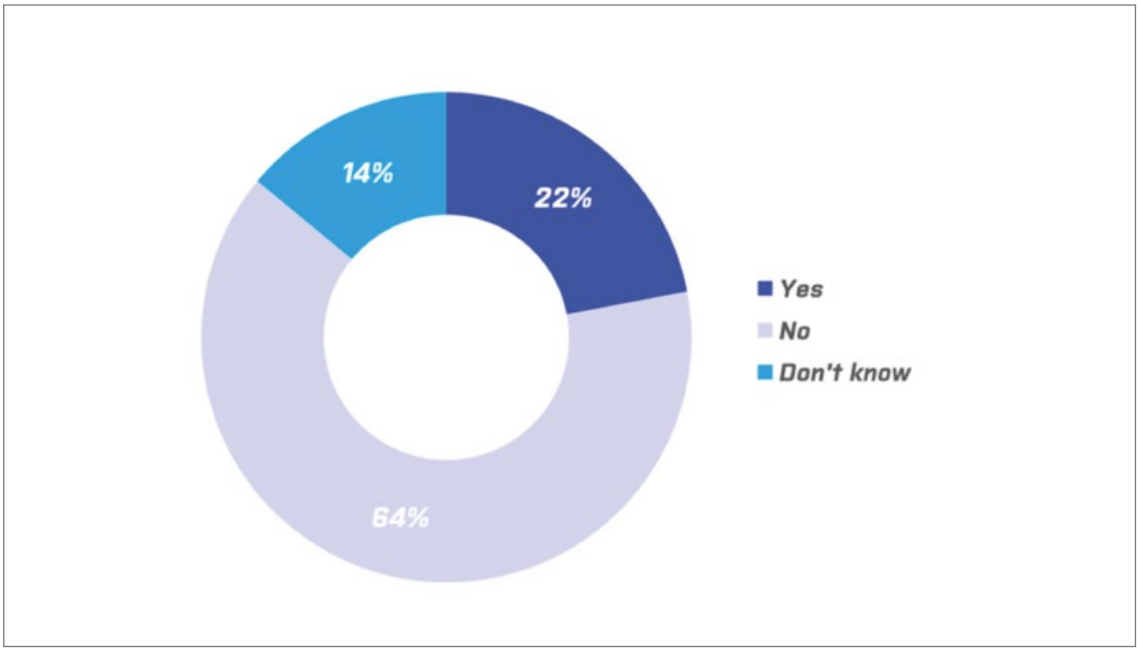
Question: Which of the following metrics do you pay most attention to when evaluating the success of your social media activity?

Figure 45. Social media integration



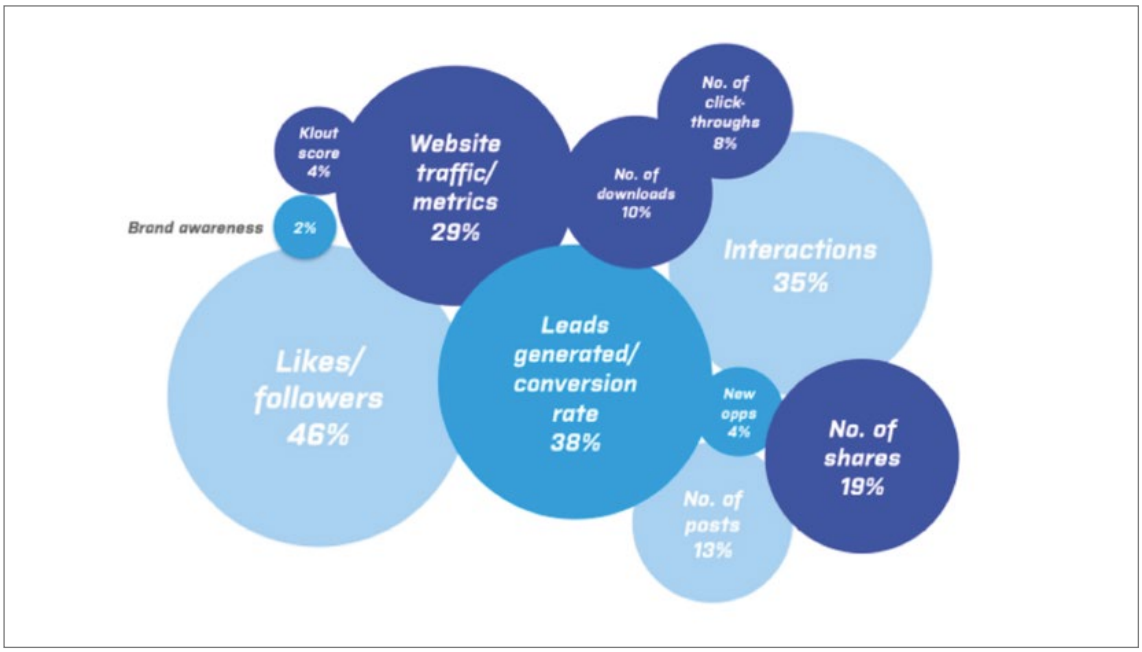
Question: To what extent would you say your organisation's social media activities are integrated into its marketing activity as a whole?

Figure 46. KPI usage



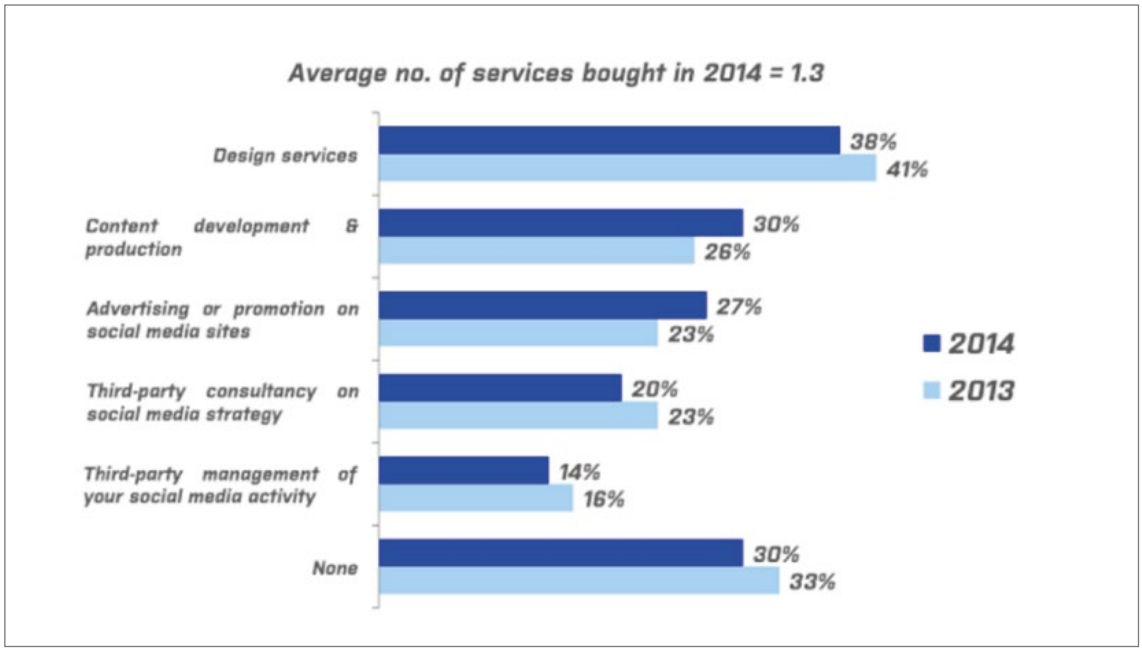
Question: Does your organisation use any KPIs that relate specifically to social media when measuring overall performance?

Figure 47. KPI usage relating specifically to social channels



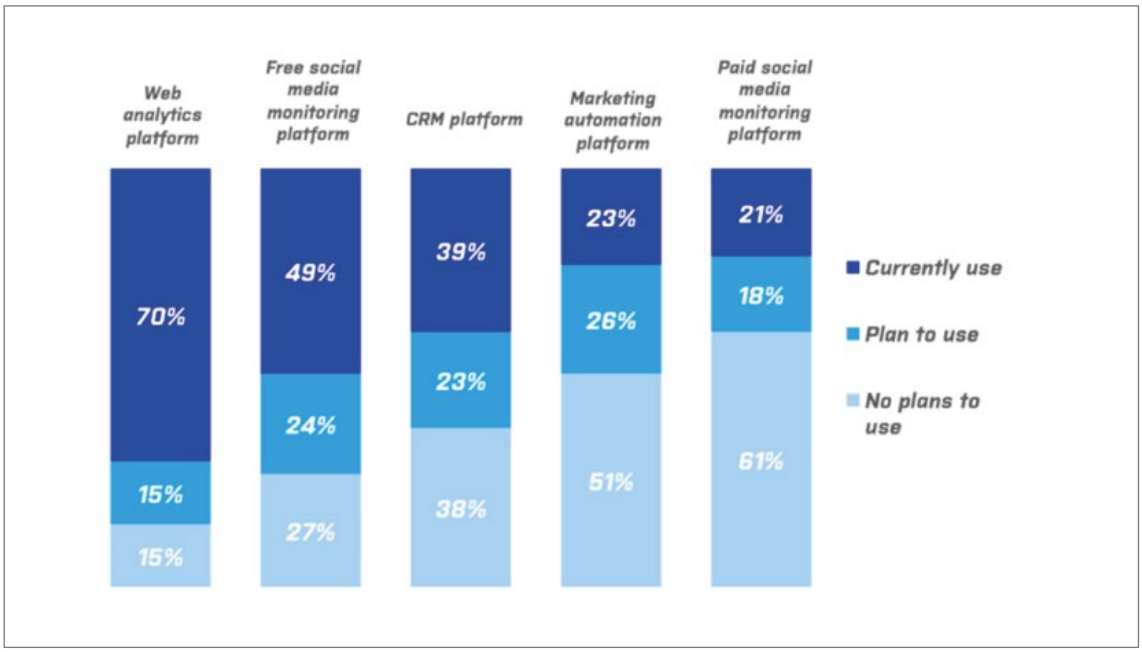
Question: Which social media KPIs do your organisation use to measure performance?

Figure 48. Outsourced services used



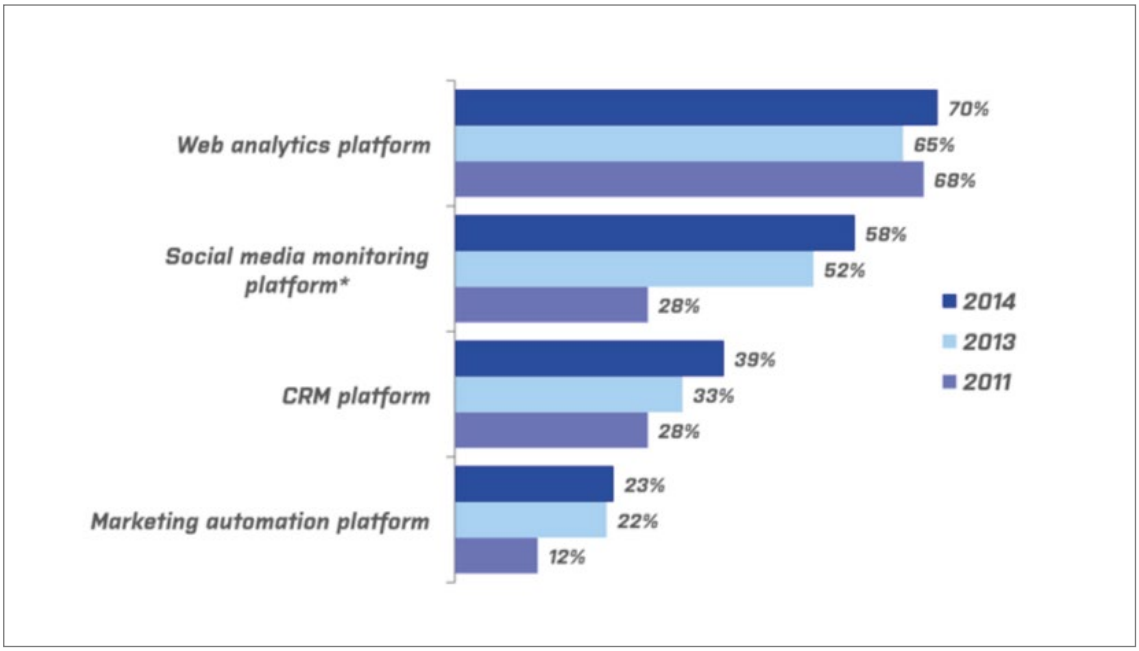
Question: In the last 12 months, which of the following services has your organisation bought to support its social activity?

Figure 49. Technology used to track effectiveness



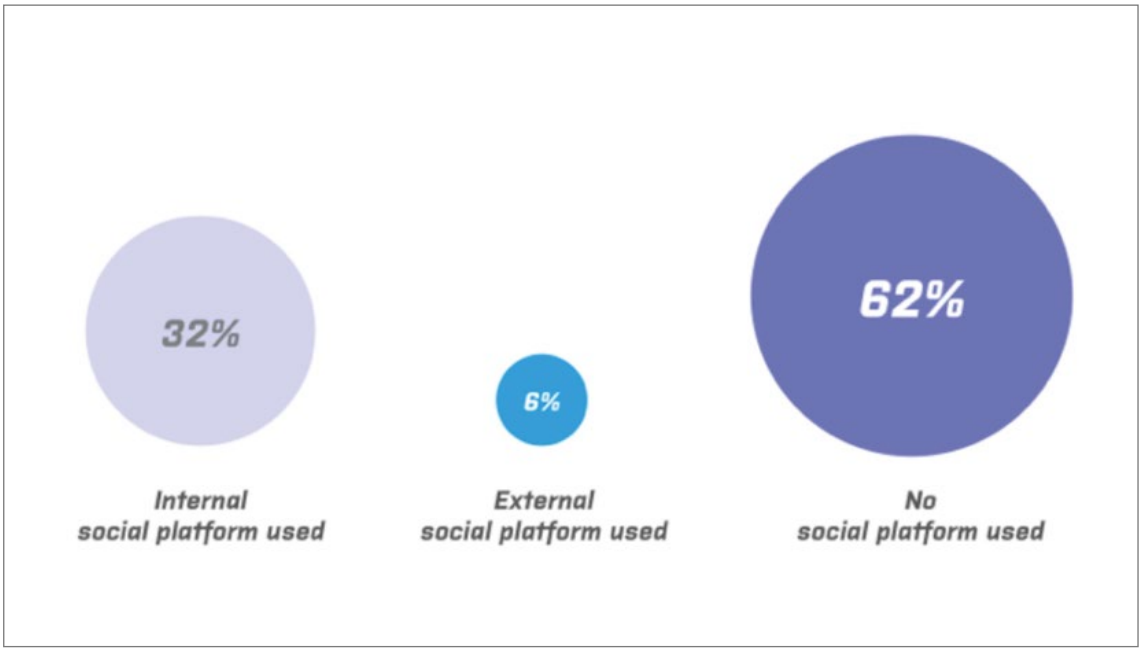
Question: Do you currently use or plan to use any technology to help track the effectiveness of your social activity?

Figure 50. Technologies used to track activity



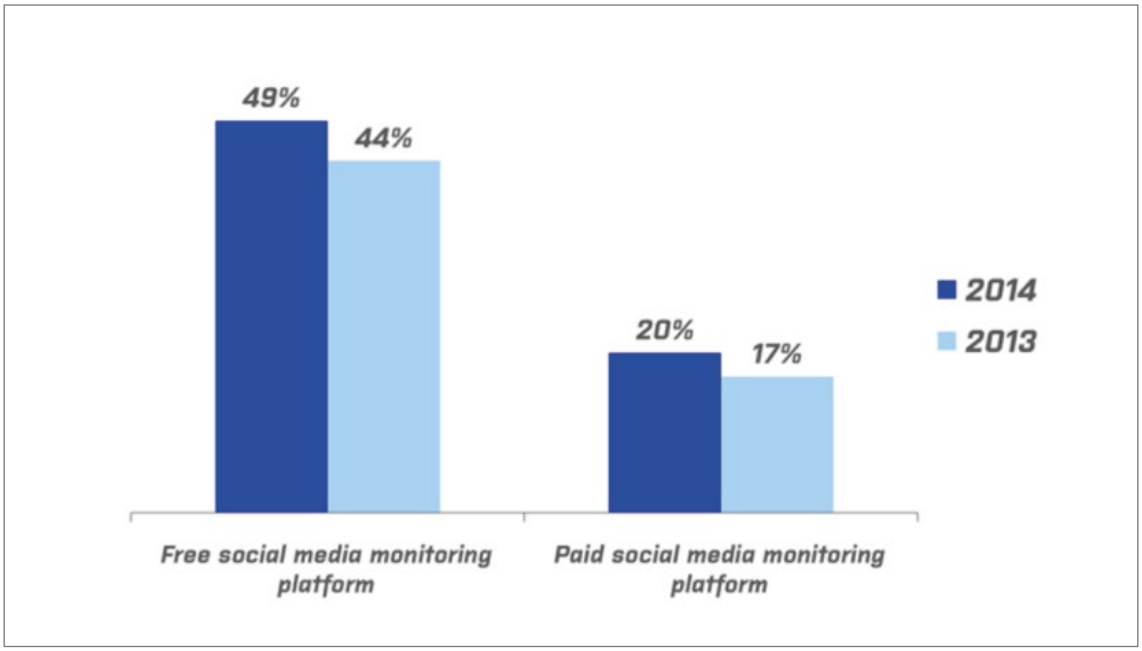
Question: Do you currently use or plan to use any technology to help track the effectiveness of your social media?

Figure 51. Social media usage for internal communications



Question: Do you use social media for internal communications?

Figure 52. Social media monitoring platform usage



Question: Do you currently use or plan to use any technology to help track effectiveness of your social activity?

STAY ON TOP OF THE MARKETING EVOLUTION

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B2B marketers have never had to be so multi-skilled, multi-tasked, and accountable to business objectives. Marketers need up-to-the-minute research, knowledge and insight to ensure they are not left behind.



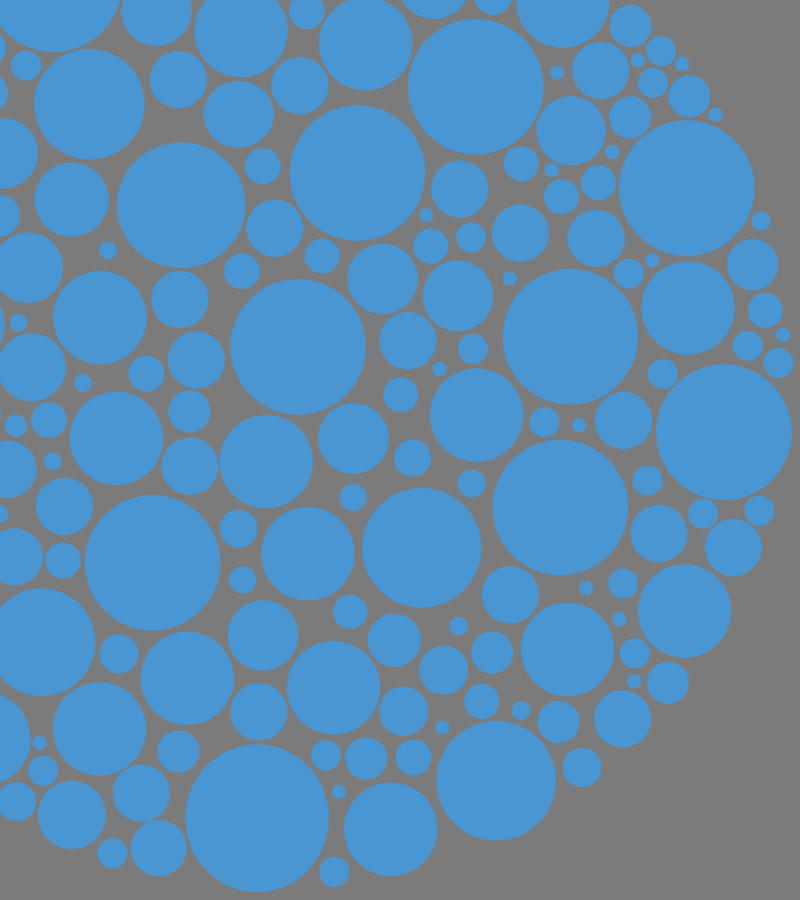
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